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The Century Guild Hobby Horse and Oscar Wilde:  
A Study of British Little Magazines, 1884-1897.

Matthew Brinton Tildesley.

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to the Department of English Studies

Durham University

2007.



— 2 APR 2008

## Abstract.

This thesis is a detailed examination of subversive aesthetic and decadent British periodicals from 1884 until 1897. Viewed as cultural documents, the magazines *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, *The Dial*, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy* are explored with particular reference to their positioning of the artist in relation to society. Major secondary sources are the works of Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater's *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. The *Hobby Horse* is viewed as being the origin of a particular discourse on the importance of the artist for society at large, and its editorial bias is examined as being a product of certain Hellenic elements in Oxford of the 1860s and 1870s. Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* features heavily in the first section. The book is initially used as a touchstone for exploring the issues of the Socratic master-pupil relationships, clandestine and subversive sexuality, the duality of subversive literary texts, and the transition from aestheticism into decadence, after which Wilde's only novel is shown to have been inspired in part by specific writings within the *Hobby Horse* itself.

The second section examines the importance of Catholicism to a renaissance of the Hellenic within artistic communities of the 1880s and '90s, and the third and final section explores the legacy of these elements of the *Hobby Horse* in the later magazines *The Dial*, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*. Specific attention is paid to the perceived relationship between Oscar Wilde and the *Yellow Book* in the final chapters, where the erroneous nature of the supposed links between Wilde and the *Yellow Book* is exposed, and Wilde's true connection with the little-known *Century Guild Hobby Horse* is revealed.



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## Citations and Abbreviations.

For the sake of brevity, frequently cited primary texts will be referred to in brackets following the quotation. For *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*'s central, annual editions (1886-92) with continuous pagination, the reference will be given as annual volume followed by issue and page number, e.g. (II, iii, 4). In later chapters where more than one periodical is being discussed, these will be prefaced with "CGHH" in order to distinguish clearly between these and other periodicals, which will be referenced by name, issue and page number, such as (*Savoy*, VII, 8).

On account of there being two "first issues" of the *Hobby Horse* (the abortive 1884 issue and the 1886 re-launch) the former will be identified as "April 1884" and followed by the relevant page number. The three issues of the Bodley Head New Series of the *Hobby Horse* will be cited as "N.S." followed by issue and page number.

Repeated and/or complicated, major secondary sources will also be abbreviated and included in the body of the text, thus:

*CWOW, II* – The Oxford Complete Works of Oscar Wilde (2000 –) volume II, *De Profundis: "Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis"*, ed. Ian Small.

*CWOW, III* – The Oxford Complete Works of Oscar Wilde (2000 –) volume III, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: The 1890 and 1891 Texts*, ed. Joseph Bristow. This abbreviation may also be given the appendage (1890) or (1891) for ease of identifying the text quoted.

*WPR* – Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text* (1980) ed. Donald L. Hill.

## Introduction.

The genesis of the present work was a discussion held between myself and my undergraduate dissertation supervisor, Prof. John Manning, in 2002. Having expressed my interest in subversive literature of the 1890s, he suggested I look at *The Savoy* (1896) as a possible topic for further research. His specific turn of phrase was to “find out what was going on” in the publication. As well as guiding my studies into the field of aesthetic and decadent Little Magazines, this discussion has also defined my critical approach. Rather than concentrating on any debates on the stylistic qualities of the literature examined, or exploring the works through a particular theoretical lens, I have been led to view the magazines as cultural documents first and foremost. The periodical format easily lends itself to such an approach, as the regular publication dates of a magazine over several years give the reader a far more detailed appreciation of the currents of a particular culture than a single, monolithic publication aimed at encapsulating the trends of a particular age, such as “the Nineties,” or a stylistic quality such as “Decadence.”

My early research into *The Savoy* saw the magazine as being a very carefully constructed reaction to events immediately preceding its publication, most notably the trials of Oscar Wilde. Much of the writing therein were viewed as being “coded erotica,” and the publication as a whole was seen to be revelling in the taboo areas of illicit or subversive sexuality, whilst simultaneously exposing the hypocrisy of middle-class bourgeois attitudes to sexuality. My postgraduate research into the same publication saw the magazine as part of a far larger cultural debate. Much of the critical work throughout *The Savoy* was revealed to be a measured and sustained

refutation of the general thesis, and many specific arguments, of Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, which first appeared in English translation in 1895.

Consequently, my doctoral research explores the dialogue between aesthetic periodicals and more mainstream constructions of late-Victorian culture, beyond the boundaries of a periodical that ran to only eight issues in 1896. The present study examines the development of artistic expression in response to criticism from bourgeois conservatism from the early 1880s until 1897. Two thirds of this work is devoted to *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, which ran from 1884 until 1894 (a gap between 1884 and '86, and a minor title change notwithstanding). Not only was this publication the most tenacious in a very unstable sector of the publishing world – thirty two issues over a ten year period – it is also notable for being the first, recognisable aesthetic, “Little Magazine” from which many others took their inspiration. Hence the greater part of this work is an extensive exploration into the *Hobby Horse*'s main preoccupations and the cultural viewpoint of its major contributors.

The initial section, “The Sketches of Dorian Gray,” explores the environment which lead to the birth of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, and the development of its stance as an art-centric magazine. As the title suggests, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is used as a frame for exploring various aspects of the *Hobby Horse*. Taking Wilde's work as a fixed point in a decade of cultural transition, the chapters of this first section draw upon various facets of Wilde's work. The transition from aestheticism to decadence, the importance of Hellenism and a subversive sexuality which leads to a necessary duality in literary texts, are all examined as developing

themes throughout the pages of a quarterly periodical. Furthermore, Wilde's personal involvement with the *Hobby Horse* and his relationships with its personnel are fully explored, leading to the conclusion that the *Hobby Horse* may be used to illuminate various aspects of Wilde's novel, and even reveal several, crucial aspects of *Dorian Gray* that had their geneses within the pages of this little-known magazine.

As a necessary part of this examination, a number of the more elusive characters of the British *fin de siècle* are brought under scrutiny. Selwyn Image, Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford from 1910 to 1916, is revealed in an earlier incarnation as sharing much in common with the infamous Wilde, and his intimate involvement with the British aesthetic and decadent movements in art and literature is brought to light. Along with him, the "British Matron," *bête noire* of so many *avant garde* writers of the 1880s and '90s reveals herself, as Image locks horns with her and her "crusade of purity" in a journalistic war of words within the *Hobby Horse* and beyond.

Herbert Percy Horne, architect and art historian, and the much lesser known theologian and historian, Arthur Galton, are also depicted in their younger years, alongside Image, as the driving force behind the *Hobby Horse*'s critical approach to the position of art in society. From the writings of these three principal characters the second section of this work, an examination of Catholicism within the *Hobby Horse*, is drawn. Catholicism is used as a critical and rhetorical tool, in tandem with Oxonian notions of the Hellenic (as espoused by Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater) to formulate a new notion of "Renaissance." Through the cultural and political continuum of Pagan and then Catholic Rome, Hellenic ideals of art and life are



embraced in an act of liberation from oppressive, perceivedly Protestant-inspired, restrictions placed upon artists during the last two decades of Victoria's reign.

Having established the central themes and values of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, the third and final section examines the legacy of this founding father of the aesthetic Little Magazines. Following the *Hobby Horse*'s role in the development of Art Nouveau book production, Charles Shannon and Charles Ricketts' periodical *The Dial* (1889-97) is examined as being a direct descendent of the *Hobby Horse* in both form and content. Throughout its pages, the defiance of the artist against bourgeois social mores is taken to new heights, and in *The Dial*'s rhetorical essays, a more distinctly Modernist agenda becomes apparent. The argument grows from being solely a defence of artistic liberty from oppressive puritanism to encompassing notions of the right to artistic interpretation.

As this study is presented in broadly chronological order, the following chapter introduces the Bodley Head as the most famous publisher of aesthetic periodicals. Though it issued *The Dial* and published the New Series of the renamed *Hobby Horse* (following the collapse of the Century Guild) and gave birth to the most widely known *fin de siècle* periodical, *The Yellow Book*, the Bodley Head itself is shown to represent a radical deviation from the political and aesthetic ideals of the periodical publishers that preceded it. Following the demise of the new *Hobby Horse* within the more aggressively commercial atmosphere of the Bodley Head, the *Yellow Book* is examined in itself, and in its role as the most famous of the Little Magazines. Though including interesting highlights, such as Hubert Crackenthorpe's development of *The Dial*'s Modernist theorising, which he broadens

to include the notion of high and low art, the *Yellow Book* is shown to be something of an anomaly amongst the periodicals here studied. The very commercialism which led to the *Yellow Book* being the most famous of the Little Magazines puts it at odds with the ideals of the earlier magazines, typified by the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*.

Viewing the *Yellow Book* from the perspective of the earlier magazines, as opposed to the perspective of more mainstream publishing, the final chapters of this work are a wide-ranging reappraisal of the *Yellow Book* and its reputation. It has been taken to be “the chief literary organ of the Decadence,”<sup>1</sup> the sole ancestor of *The Savoy*, and popularly linked to Oscar Wilde, in terms of both his life and works.

The aesthetic and political stance of the *Yellow Book* is examined in comparison to the earlier magazines, and consequently the *Savoy* is seen to have a much closer allegiance with the *Hobby Horse* than its immediate, yellow predecessor.

Furthermore, the popular myths linking Wilde to the *Yellow Book* are re-evaluated and ultimately dismissed. The final, concluding chapter examines Wilde’s dealings with the *Yellow Book* in detail, and having demonstrated the profound disparity between the ideals of the man and the magazine, re-affirms his long-standing connections with the ideas and ideals of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*. From their Ruskinian Arts and Crafts roots, through Paterian aestheticism and ultimately into a perceived notion of decadence, Oscar Wilde and *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* are shown to be allies, friends and co-conspirators in a revolutionary redrawing of

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<sup>1</sup> G. A. Cervasco, *The Breviary of the Decadence: J.-K. Huysmans's A Rebours and English Literature* (New York: AMS, 2001) 36.

the artist's place in British society, and fellow harbingers of a late Victorian Renaissance.

1. The Sketches of Dorian Gray: Oscar Wilde and *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, from Aestheticism to Decadence.

### 1.1 Selwyn Image and Oscar Wilde.

The exact time of the founding of the Century Guild is unknown – a detail lost from amongst the letters, articles, poetry and biographical accounts that survived the ravages of the twentieth century. However, it is certain that it occurred somewhere between June 1882 and 1883, and the organisation “gradually faded out” by around 1890.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of founding the Guild was “to render all branches of art the sphere no longer of the tradesman but of the artist. It would restore building, decoration, glass painting, pottery, wood carving and metalwork to their right place beside painting and sculpture.”<sup>3</sup> Such a statement makes clear the debt owed by the Guild to William Morris, whose incendiary career dominates the Arts and Crafts movement of the later Victorian age.<sup>4</sup> Alongside Morris, the three founding members of the Guild, Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942), Herbert Percy Horne (1864-1916) and Selwyn Image (1849-1930), were influenced profoundly by John Ruskin, under whom both Image and Mackmurdo had studied at Oxford.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Lillian Block states that their “admiration for Ruskin approached absolute

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<sup>2</sup> Sylvia Elizabeth Tickner, “Selwyn Image: His Life, Work and Associations,” Ph.D., University of Reading, 1970, 60. See also Peter Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987) “The Century Guild” 69-116.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Percy Horne, *The Century Guild: The Hobby Horse [Prospectus]* (London: The Century Guild-Chiswick Press, 1886).

<sup>4</sup> The Guild’s relationship with Morris will feature in the concluding chapters of the present work. More detailed accounts of Morris’s influence on the Guild may be found in Stansky, *Redesigning the World*, Lillian Rachel Block, “Pursuit of Beauty: The Background and Creators of *The Hobby Horse Magazine*,” M.A., Columbia University, 1941 and Lorraine Lively Hunt, “The Century Guild Hobby Horse: A Study of a Magazine,” PhD, University of North Carolina, 1965.

<sup>5</sup> Curiously, Image always chose to distance himself from actual membership of the Guild, claiming that he was “not formally of their number” in the January 1887 issue of the *Hobby Horse* in his article “The Unity of Art,” page 2. However, along with Mackmurdo and Horne, he remained a constant presence, contributing to each issue of the magazine and had a significant role in the shifting editorial team over the years. A brief biographical note on Image announcing his election to the Slade Professorship in 1910 appears to cite Image himself, or possibly Mackmurdo referring to Image, as “critic, counsellor, and fellow-conspirator” of the Guild. Anonymous and undated newspaper cutting, Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310, 329.

worship.”<sup>6</sup> (Horne did not attend Oxford, but studied under Image before becoming apprenticed to Mackmurdo, with whom he later went into partnership.)

Mackmurdo and Horne were both architects (their works including some design work for aspects of The Savoy Hotel, 1889)<sup>7</sup> and both were enamoured with the art and architecture of Renaissance Italy. Mackmurdo was a frequent visitor to Italy, where he instigated a movement to save Wren’s threatened churches, and Horne’s increasing interest in the history of Italian art led him to move to Florence in 1904, where he remained until his death. Both could be considered polymaths, whose spheres of expertise included art, poetry, literary and artistic criticism, alongside architecture and art history; Mackmurdo’s later life was almost exclusively devoted to political and social theorising, with an evolutionary-socialist bias.<sup>8</sup> The Guild’s focal meeting place was secured in Autumn 1889 when Mackmurdo purchased the house at 20 Fitzroy Street, a location central to the British decadent movement.<sup>9</sup>

The third member of the Guild’s triumvirate is yet more difficult to characterise.

Selwyn Image was an artist, a designer of stained glass and a new Greek type-face for publishers Macmillans; his design skills were such that in 1902 he was

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<sup>6</sup> Block, "The Pursuit of Beauty," 5.

<sup>7</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner would appear to have been misled by Mackmurdo as to the precise extent of their involvement in The Savoy Hotel. See Stansky, *Redesigning the World* 72, n.5.

<sup>8</sup> For details of this aspect of Mackmurdo’s work, see Block, "The Pursuit of Beauty." The appendices to this thesis include several letters from Mackmurdo, many of which reveal his political preoccupations at the time of writing.

<sup>9</sup> Tenants at Fitzroy Street included Horne, Lionel Johnson, Victor Plarr, Arthur Galton, Thomas Sturge Moore, T. H. McLachlan and for many years, Selwyn Image. The house hosted early meetings of the Rhymers’ Club and over the years was the frequent haunt of the cream of *fin-de-siècle* British artists: Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Roger Fry, Ernest Dowson, W. B. Yeats, John Gray, "Michael Field," Laurence Binyon, Ernest Rhys, Richard Le Gallienne, Arthur Symons, Will Rothenstein, Stewart Headlam, Walter Crane, Simeon Solomon and others. (See Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 29.)

approached to submit a design for the King's Coronation Procession;<sup>10</sup> he was a poet, letter writer, critic, Anglican Priest, zealous anti-Puritan, and part owner of a sugar plantation in Barbados. Image became a defender of the music halls and Oscar Wilde as they took their turn in the firing line of bourgeois Victorian attitudes towards morality, and also spoke out publicly against the Temperance movement. He was central member of the British Decadent circles of the *fin de siècle*, frequent escort to young female theatrical performers and latterly Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford University.

Image's ancestors, Huguenots who migrated from Avignon to East Anglia in the late seventeenth century, appear to be the very epitome of dry, passive gentility, comprising a long line of clergymen, artists, fossil collectors and butterfly breeders.<sup>11</sup> His own father was Vicar of Bodiam, Sussex, and it was assumed that Selwyn would follow in his ancestors' footsteps. Although his considerable artistic talents were evident during his education at Marlborough College, when he attended New College Oxford, c.1868, his intentions were initially to take Holy Orders. At Oxford, Image "placed himself almost exclusively under the influence of John Ruskin" who both influenced and nurtured the artistic side of the young man.<sup>12</sup> After his first meeting with Ruskin, Image wrote to his brother, John, on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1871,

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<sup>10</sup> His plans are included in the *Architectural Review*, volume XI for February 1902. See page 257, Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310.

<sup>11</sup> Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 3. Image's letters and diary held in the Bodleian demonstrate that in his later years he was to follow his ancestors in such pursuits as breeding and collecting butterflies, and his later poetry shows a consistent veneration for the beauties of nature.

<sup>12</sup> Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 10.

The more intensely I feel, what God is, what life is, what our own present days are, what Christianity, and what our English or any other Church – the more certainly I am assured that Holy Orders is not for me.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, the inner struggle between the two possible careers of artist and clergyman resulted in Image following into his father's occupation, being ordained first a deacon, and then Priest at All Hallows, Tottenham, later that same year. Image's earlier doubts about life in the clergy, however, soon came to the fore once more, compelling him to tell his father in December 1873 that "I am sick of religionists – out and out – utterly sickened of their squabbles and meannesses and follies and uncharitableness."<sup>14</sup> The specific reasons for Image's leaving the Church are, however, ambiguous; his letters to Mackmurdo at the time offer a tantalising glimpse into the situation, as he tells his friend, "The Church I think will not come down on me with any penalties – though I suppose they might legally be visited on me – But they won't – I am too small fry."<sup>15</sup> Whatever the nature of his misdemeanour, by 1880 the conflict between the man and his career was over – Image had resigned his curacy and was studying art with Mackmurdo (with whom he had become close friends two years earlier) and Ruskin's assistant, Arthur Burgess.<sup>16</sup> From within this artistic community grew the Century Guild, and in 1884, its "in-house" magazine, *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* was first published.

For those seeking to define the man, Selwyn Image's subsequent life was something of an enigma, leading R. K. R. Thornton and Ian Small to describe his personality as

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<sup>13</sup> Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* (New York: Garland, 1977) 25. This declaration by Image also introduces the concept of differing perceptions of "Christianity," which will become increasingly important in later chapters on Image's writings.

<sup>14</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 16.

<sup>15</sup> February 4<sup>th</sup> 1881. The Letters of S. Image to A. H. Mackmurdo. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Letters e.38, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 18.



a “mixture of passion and frigidity.”<sup>17</sup> To “Michael Field” Image was “High Church and Bohemian in due measure that disconcerts neither himself nor anyone else.”<sup>18</sup>

Writing to Arthur Moore in 1890, Ernest Dowson recalled a meeting with Horne and Image thus:

In the evening I slacked & eventually met Image and Horne at midnight outside the “back door” of the Alhambra! & was introduced to various trivial coryphées. There was something eminently grotesque in the juxtaposition. Horne very erect & slim & aesthetic - & Image the most dignified man in London, a sort of cross in appearance between a secular abbé & Baudelaire, with a manner du 18<sup>me</sup> siècle – waiting in a back passage to be escort to ballet girls ~~whom they don’t even~~!!!<sup>19</sup>

Lawrence Binyon’s account of him, included in the catalogue preface to Image’s Memorial Exhibition (Cotswold Gallery, 1930), is particularly striking in its many similarities to descriptions of the character of Oscar Wilde:

I cannot think that any one in our day was a better talker. His talk came from a ripe mind, rich in reminiscence; but its special charm was the quick and cordial enjoyment of life which it communicated. Little incidents, chance insights and encounters, disappointments and delights became vivid and moving adventures. His talk, with all its delicious humour and sentiment, was coloured by strong convictions and frank prejudices: it had gusto, it had always style.<sup>20</sup>

The idea of no one in Binyon’s day being a “better talker,” when that “day” included Wilde, may sound a little surprising to certain modern readers. The nature of Wilde’s fall from grace and his secular crucifixion, has led him to become legendary, canonised, even. Due to this position in popular perception, Wilde has been endowed with a mantle of uniqueness. The fact that his downfall was precipitated by

<sup>17</sup> Selwyn Image and Herbert Horne, *Poems and Carols (1894) with Diversi Colores (1891)*, Decadents, Symbolists, Anti-Decadents: Poetry of the 1890s, eds. R. K. R. Thornton and Ian Small (Oxford: Woodstock, 1995) first of six pages, un-numbered introduction.

<sup>18</sup> Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 1.

<sup>19</sup> Desmond Flower and Henry Maas, eds., *The Letters of Ernest Dowson* (London: Cassell, 1967) 132.

<sup>20</sup> Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 1-2.

a “secret sin” only serves to emphasise this notion of singularity and solitude.

However, Wilde’s views on art and life in general were not formed in isolation; staggering though his intellect may have been, his ideas were formed from the ideas of others, as he matured amongst a wide circle of peers; first at Trinity and Oxford, and later in the artistic communities of the *fin de siècle*.

Selwyn Image was a significant figure in such circles, though his presence amongst the British Decadent movement is paid little or no attention in the majority of studies of the era.<sup>21</sup> As he outlived Wilde by some thirty years, and his later life was defined by his most prestigious position, it is the older, Professor Selwyn Image who has left his modest mark upon the world of art and letters. Though never “dry,” this persona is definitely sedate and genteel, leading Will Rothenstein to remember him as “the ‘safe’ candidate” for the Slade Professorship, taken up in 1910, when he was chosen in preference to Roger Fry and W. R. Lethaby.<sup>22</sup>

Mackmurdo, when editing a posthumous collection of poems, stated that throughout Image’s poetry “unfolds the personality as it grows from lusty youth to age ripe with wisdom.”<sup>23</sup> However, Mackmurdo’s editorial skills in presenting selections of Image’s letters and poems lead the *Saturday Review* to sum up the late Professor’s existence as “A Simple, Quiet Life.”<sup>24</sup> It is the “lusty youth” who deserves more attention than that given in Mackmurdo’s “edition” of Image’s life and work.

<sup>21</sup> Writing in 1987, Lambert and Ratcliffe concur that Image is one who has “vanished from general memory.” J. W. Lambert and Michael Ratcliffe, *The Bodley Head: 1887-1987* (London: Bodley Head, 1987) 43.

<sup>22</sup> William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein: 1900-1922* (London: Faber, 1934) 212.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, ed., *The Poems of Selwyn Image* (London: Mathews, 1932) v.

<sup>24</sup> Review of Mackmurdo’s *Selwyn Image: Letters* (1932). *The Saturday Review*, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1932, 229. Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310, 337.

Image's poetry, prose and criticism throughout the latter twenty years of the nineteenth century reflect, illustrate, and even influence the growing tensions between bourgeois morality and artistic and personal freedom which grew throughout the 1880s, culminating in Wilde's imprisonment in 1895. Images' work in the *Hobby Horse* is wide ranging, stretching from woodcuts and design work to artistic and social criticism, poetry and sharp-witted, risqué fiction, as he takes up arms against the rising tide of puritanism in late Victorian Britain. As shall be explored in later chapters, subversive and clandestine sexuality played a very large part in this particular struggle for artistic liberation. Oscar Wilde became a personification of this struggle, as his life and art became inextricably linked, both for himself and his prosecutors; but the philosophies behind Wilde's "social crimes" – be they personal or artistic – were far more widespread than his life and works alone.

The writings of Selwyn Image in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* would appear to prefigure many of the preoccupations in Wilde's own work, particularly *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Certainly, a considerable degree of similarity in the two men's works must be expected, as a result of their both attending Oxford University, and moving in the same artistic circles. Nevertheless, there may be cause to suspect that some of Image's works in the late 1880s were direct influences on Wilde's later work. However, as sexuality became a dominant discourse in this struggle within society (as is ably demonstrated by Wilde's novel and its reception), it is first necessary to examine what may be discerned of the sexual life and opinions of Selwyn Image himself.

Whilst researching her MA thesis in 1940, Lillian Block was fortunate enough to contact Mackmurdo (then 91) personally, and in the correspondence that followed, the aging artist spoke of his “oldest and dearest friend,” Professor Selwyn Image: “To him I owe much in a world of maze: so catholic in his taste: so human in his sympathies, as was Browning who found some good in prostitutes, some bad in Bishops.”<sup>25</sup> That Mackmurdo should use this particular example to illustrate Image’s broadness of view is of particular significance, as Image’s involvement with the London music halls illustrates.

The Local Government Act of 1888 gave the newly created County Councils direct control over “registering premises of public entertainment and granting licences to proprietors.”<sup>26</sup> Music halls became a specific cause for concern for the newly appointed licencing body, as many were perceived as being the “established haunts of prostitutes.”<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Ormiston Chant, a mouthpiece for the growing army of puritanical social activists of the 1880s and 1890s who sought to eradicate this particular evil, opposed the licence for The Empire on the grounds that “the place at night is the habitual resort of prostitutes in pursuit of their traffic, and that portions of the entertainment are most objectionable, obnoxious, and against the best interests and moral well-being of the community at large.”<sup>28</sup> For this lady and others, there was little distinction to be made between the prostitutes on the promenades outside, and the performers on the stage itself.

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<sup>25</sup> Letter to Miss Block, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1940, transcribed Block, “The Pursuit of Beauty,” 141.

<sup>26</sup> “Information Leaflet No. 28: Sources for the History of London Theatres and Music Halls at London Metropolitan Archives,” June 2006. *London Metropolitan Archives*. 17 May 2007.

< <http://213.86.34.248/NR/rdonlyres/B4DF8708-1E9F-45AB-84BD-D63F40D6C56D/0/infono28.pdf> > 2.

<sup>27</sup> “Information Leaflet No. 28: London Theatres and Music Halls,” 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Image saw the attempts to close the promenades as “*Essentially* [...] the spirit of Puritanism: the spirit which condemns the human body as a vile thing, and regards the free life of the senses as evil,” in an article for *The Church Reformer*.<sup>29</sup> Writing for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, he uses masterful rhetoric to illustrate how the closure of the promenades will not curb prostitution at all (being Ormiston Chant’s ostensible aim) but merely result in the closure of the theatre as a whole.<sup>30</sup> Image was involved in this counter-movement against the puritans from the first, and his vehemence in the matter is made plain in a letter to Herbert Horne in 1889:

This is the season, as you know, for renewing licences. The Committee of the London County Council are making bigger asses of themselves over the business, than ever did even the antient [sic] magistrates [...] One of their number, a certain McDougall, seems to have been going the round, and sniffing about for nastiness. I hope he may suffer in hell eternally, with his nose held over a privy [...] We must exterminate the impudent creatures, who oppose and seek to rule us; or be ourselves exterminated.<sup>31</sup>

Writing to his brother John at around the same time, Image sought to explain his involvement in the matter thus:

I am much interested in music-halls for their own sake, and would do anything in my power to fight their battle: but I am fighting now with the more vigour, because I am certain that if these people have their way with the halls to-day, to-morrow they will go on to attack higher forms of art. This puritan or purity movement, which is gaining all over the place, is *essentially* opposed to the first principle upon which all art is based: and in my poor way I will do my best to fight it to the death.<sup>32</sup>

This “first principle” was, for Image, sensuality. In the previous letter, he refers to a meeting at the home of the radical Christian Socialist and fellow anti-puritan, Rev.

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<sup>29</sup> “The New Puritanism,” undated fragment from *The Church Reformer* (1894). Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310, 247-8.

<sup>30</sup> Letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Oct 14<sup>th</sup>, 1894. Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310, 319.

<sup>31</sup> Letter to Horne, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1889. Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 64.

<sup>32</sup> Letter to John Image, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1889. Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 66.

Stewart Headlam,<sup>33</sup> where he “was moved to make a speech, and set forth in unadorned terms the gospel of sensuousness, as the very foundation for fine art.” However, as the letter to his brother indicated, artistic freedom was not his sole reason in defending the music halls. As may be gleaned from Dowson’s letter above, Image had a personal interest in the performers themselves. A letter to Mackmurdo, probably from 1889, declares, “do come to the Theatre tonight – where I am told the exhibition of feminine legs is indeed inexpressibly entrancing,”<sup>34</sup> demonstrating that the (unspecified) professional women to be found there were of at least as much interest to Image as was their plight. Sylvia Tickner, when listing the veritable “Who’s Who” of the British decadent circle that frequented the Crown, stated that “Image, like so many of the Crown habituées [sic] was frequently seen escorting a [lady] from the Empire or the Alhambra.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, supporting the dancers became something of a *cause célèbre* amongst the decadents, leading Image, Horne, Victor Plarr and Arthur Symons to institute “The Secret Society of the Believers in the Ballet.”<sup>36</sup>

Stewart Duckworth Headlam (1847-1924) is a key figure within this particular circle. As editor of *The Church Reformer*, he blazed a peculiar trail through the *fin de siècle*

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<sup>33</sup> There is some confusion over the spelling of Headlam’s name. In Image’s *Poems*, edited by Mackmurdo it is given as “Stuart.” In the current work, however, the Oxford *Dictionary of National Biography*’s spelling of “Stewart” will be used.

<sup>34</sup> Letters of S. Image to A. H. Mackmurdo. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Letters e.39, 83. Image signs himself “S. I.” with a small, trident-wielding devil draped over his monograph.

<sup>35</sup> Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 502. Many of Image’s unpublished letters also appear to refer to liaisons with young performers. Though a number of the letters held in the Bodleian deal with arrangements regarding artists’ models, a few of the girls written about to Mackmurdo are given the prefix “Mdlle,” indicating a distinct difference in status. A letter to Mackmurdo postmarked March 8<sup>th</sup> 1886 declares “Mddle Alicia Rebecca will be with you on Monday at 5.30. p.m. – We shall meet I hope soon. Meantime, Farewell,” and has the post-script, “I did not make an arrangement with her for myself last time as she was in a great hurry, and there was no time to think what could be done.” (Present author’s private collection.)

<sup>36</sup> Matthew Sturgis, *Passionate Attitudes: The English Decadence of the 1890s* (London: Macmillan, 1995) 100.

as a rabidly fanatical anti-puritan Anglican clergyman, and moved within the circles of artists and writers that defined the British decadent movement. Quite probably on Image's suggestion, he stood surety for half of Wilde's bail in 1895, and Sylvia Tickner ventures to propose that his particular sympathy with sexual deviance "had no doubt been extended by [his brief], disastrous marriage to a lesbian."<sup>37</sup> Staunch defender of dancing *per se* (indeed he wrote a book on the subject and argued strongly for the re-institution of dancing into the liturgy)<sup>38</sup> he established private dances for his friends and the *belles* of the music hall, initially at St. James' Hall, and later at his own house.<sup>39</sup> The letters of Ernest Dowson give a brief glimpse into this world, which Victor Plarr recalled as "a brilliant picturesque episode [in the] crowded artistic life of the early '90s."<sup>40</sup> Writing to Arthur Moore, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1889, and bemoaning the after-effects of "that little green absinthe," Dowson laments,

I should by now be dancing neath S. Headlam's Chinese lanterns with fair sylphs of Th' Empire & Alhambra. But somehow I couldn't come up to the scratch. The liver & the spleen, chiefly the latter have stood in my way. I am rather sorry because it would have been novel & unconventional to say the least.<sup>41</sup>

The picture Dowson and Plarr paint would easily fit the descriptions of Dorian Gray's exotic gatherings, and could indeed be seen as part of the environment in which Wilde's heady mix of the exotic and the illicit, as found in his novel, was

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<sup>37</sup> Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 505-7.

<sup>38</sup> Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 485-6.

<sup>39</sup> This interest in the wellbeing of the young performers, whom the purity movement sought to ostracise from society, is tantalisingly ambiguous, but not without precedent. The esteemed Victorian businessman, and unparalleled collector and cataloguer of European pornography, Henry Spencer Ashbee, was deeply involved in charitable organisations supporting "fallen women," his personality fusing the erotic with the philanthropic. (Professor John Manning, communicated privately.)

<sup>40</sup> In his *Ernest Dowson 1888-1897: Reminiscences, Unpublished Letters and Marginalia*, cited Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 489.

<sup>41</sup> Flower and Maas, *Letters of Ernest Dowson* 85. Such dances are referred to by Dowson in subsequent letters in 1890 and 1891 (in the latter, Headlam is referred to as "the Heresiarch"), pages 130 and 181 respectively.

formulated.<sup>42</sup> Image's part in the proceedings is characteristically ambiguous. Ezra Pound offers this retrospective interpretation in his poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley":

Dowson found harlots cheaper than hotels;  
 Headlam for uplift; Image impartially imbued  
 With raptures for Bacchus, Terpsichore and the Church.  
 So spoke the author of "The Dorian Mood"<sup>43</sup>

Image's own poetry provides another insight into this half-lit world of pseudo-illicit charms. Beginning "Let others sing of the country's charm," the poem "Urbanus Loquitur" (1894) explores the pleasures of the city, which often go unseen:

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<sup>42</sup> Chapter 9 of the Lippincott's edition, in which Wilde compresses almost two decades into a dizzying montage of exotic living, includes details of various *soirées* held at Dorian's home: "on each Wednesday evening while the season lasted, he would throw open to the world his beautiful house and have the most celebrated musicians of the day to charm his guests with the wonders of their art. His little dinners [...] were noted [...] for the exquisite taste shown in the decoration of the table, with its subtle symphonic arrangements of exotic flowers, and embroidered cloths, and antique plate of gold and silver." *CWOW, III* (1890), 107.

<sup>43</sup> Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems: 1908-1969* (London: Faber, 1977) 102 (98-112.) *In the Dorian Mood* (1896) was written by Victor Plarr. Image played a significant role in Pound's initial reception into the literary circles of the UK, as is evident from his diary entry for Sunday March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1909: "wrote letters of introduction for Ezra Pound to Jepson, Plarr, and Dircks." *Diary of S. Image*. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. d. 349, 34.



For me, for me, another world's  
 Enchantments hold my heart in thrall :  
 These London pavements, low'ring sky,  
 Store secrets, on mine eyes that fall,  
 More curious far, than earth or air  
 By country paths can make appear.

The stern reformer scowls aghast,  
 'Mid the doomed city's trackless woe :  
 Apelles veils his shuddering gaze,  
 Its ugliness "offends him so" :  
 The dainty-eared musician dies  
 In torment, of its raucous cries.

Yet are there souls of coarser grain,  
 Or else more flexible, who find  
 Strange, infinite allurements lurk,  
 Undreamed of by the simpler mind,  
 Along these streets, within the walls  
 Of *cafés*, shops, and music halls.<sup>44</sup>

The love of the city over the country in Image's early verse is typical of decadent poetry, distinguishing it from its more nature-orientated, Romantic forebears.<sup>45</sup> Also, the idea of "souls of coarser grain" and the atmosphere of clandestine delights – "enchantments," curious "secrets" and "allurements" that "lurk" within the London less traveled by respectable society – match Wilde's decadent novel (and indeed his private life) exactly, and may indicate a shared taste in such pleasures between the two authors. Image's confession in "De Profundis" (1894) would tend to give strength to such a supposition:

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<sup>44</sup> Image and Horne, *Poems and Carols (1894) with Diversi Colores (1891)* 15-16.

<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Culler notes that "Baudelaire is a poet of the city," citing him as the first to take city life as his central theme. See his introduction, Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan, Introd. Jonathan Culler. Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: OUP, 1993) xxvi. This aspect of Baudelaire's work is mirrored by many British poets of the *fin de siècle*, for example see Arthur Symonds, *London Nights* (London: Smithers, 1895).

Because my courage ebbs away ;  
     Because my spirit's eyes are dim ;  
     Because with failures to the brim  
 My cup fills day by day :

Because forbidden ways invite ;  
     Because the smile of sin is sweet ;  
     Because so readily run my feet  
 Towards paths, that close in night : <sup>46</sup>

This particular poem raises rather awkward questions, namely what is “forbidden,” by whom, and for what reason? For a man who fought puritanism and censorship so consistently and tenaciously, the very idea of “the forbidden” would seem anathema. However, in his article “Butterflies at the Empire” published in *The Saturday Review* April 13<sup>th</sup> 1901,<sup>47</sup> his recollections of his music-hall-going days suggest that the idea of what one is permitted to do and what is forbidden may be an imposed, class-based, social construction:

Fifteen years ago, well you went to the Alhambra, or the Empire, or the Pavilion, or the Oxford; but in genteel society, at dinner parties and where ladies came, you did not mention the fact. At least, if you were pressed, you owned up to it with a blush, you made confession of your vulgarity, almost your sin, under your breath.<sup>48</sup>

Hence the quintessentially late-Victorian quality of duality, the very backbone of Wilde's novel, is apparent in the life and work of Selwyn Image. The life of “secret sins” indulged in amongst those “of coarser grain” is to be kept strictly separate from the life lived in genteel society.

One may be tempted to read Image's poetry as being fictitious, or at least not *lyrical*;

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<sup>46</sup> Image and Horne, *Poems and Carols (1894) with Diversi Colores (1891)* 41.

<sup>47</sup> A review of *Les Pappillons* affords Image this opportunity to reminisce.

<sup>48</sup> Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310, 252.

however this would go against the evidence of those who knew his methods. A. H. Mackmurdo wrote in 1932, “he never wrote a line of verse save when it had been wrung out of him by the force of an emotion which some stirring event had unloosened, the reader will know it to have been so.”<sup>49</sup> This does indeed appear to be the case, even if Mackmurdo expresses the idea rather dramatically. In 1896 Image contributed to several numbers of *The Savoy* and the April issue includes a poem, “The Truant’s Holiday,” that would appear to be no more than a fanciful creation based on pagan themes:

Come, let us forth, Sibylla! The brave day,  
                     See, ’s all a-quiver with gold and blue!  
 Come, let us fly these paltry streets, and pay  
                     Our matin worship at some woodland shrine<sup>50</sup>

However, a letter to Alderson Horne (proprietor of *The Londoner*) reveals that the poem is in fact “an invitation to Janet to come out and spend a day in Epping Forest.”<sup>51</sup> Not only does this letter illustrate the fact that much of Image’s poetry is based on his personal life, it also clarifies the issue of Image’s relationships with music-hall dancers: Janet McHale was an 18 year old dancer whom Image befriended in 1891 (Image himself being 42), and subsequently married on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 1901.

Looking at Image’s early poetry, however, it is manifestly clear that here was a man who burned with sexual passion well before his marriage at the ripe age of 52. Only

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<sup>49</sup> In his introduction, Mackmurdo, ed., *The Poems of Selwyn Image* vi.

<sup>50</sup> Selwyn Image, “The Truant’s Holiday,” *The Savoy: An Illustrated Quarterly* April 1896: 163.

<sup>51</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 91.

a fraction of his prodigious poetic output was ever published. Writing to Horne as early as 1886, whilst attempting to organize his manuscripts, he stated that he was “appalled to discover that one way or another there must be nearly 200 of them! I never realized how much I had scribbled.”<sup>52</sup> Though he contributed poetry to various magazines throughout his lifetime, only two collected volumes were ever published: *Poems and Carols* (1894), which consisted of 33 verses, several of which had been previously published in the *Hobby Horse*; and the posthumous collection edited by Mackmurdo in 1932. This reprinted much of the earlier work, but with an additional 77 poems, largely arranged in chronological order. As Tickner notes, “Most of the earlier poems were the outcome of personal feelings, few of which were intended for publication” and that “both collections contain poems more sensual in tone than might be expected from the pen of a Victorian ex-clergyman.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, many of the earlier poems positively smolder with passion and sensuality, with “In Love’s Snare,” written in 1882, being a particularly piquant example:

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<sup>52</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 58. The vast majority of these early poems appear to be now lost. The largest collection is held in the Bodleian, being Mackmurdo’s early manuscript drafts for the collected poems, and later poetry from the twentieth century. Very few poems dating from the period Image indicates here are present.

<sup>53</sup> Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 295 and 97.

O BARE your throat, Lynnette,—said he —  
     O bare your bosom so soft, and white,  
     That my lips are longing to close on tight:  
 O bare them full for my eyes to see,  
     For there's never a sight  
 So fair elsewhere to ravish me!

[...]

And you're here, Lynette, and I hold you, dear!  
     Do I dream? Is it vision or truth? Do I kiss  
     Or dream that I'm kissing like this and this  
 And this, till the lips are tired with mere  
     Sheer passion and bliss  
 Of your beautiful body that's lying here?

[...]

And what does it matter? You're here, and I,  
     And Love, that's over us both on fire  
     With the pulse that is all in all of desire.  
 And what does it matter? —The hour will fly.  
     Ah! God, and expire!  
 But here, Lynette, for the while you lie.<sup>54</sup>

Again, a poem simply dedicated to Mackmurdo and dated August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1883 blazes with passion:

Ah! that dainty love-mouth!  
 Kiss, kiss, kiss, till the lips are burnt to white  
 With the kissing lips of passion that clings tight,  
 Tight, tight, tight, till the blood's red fails for burning  
     Of love's cruel, sweetest drouth.<sup>55</sup>

The physicality of Image's early love poetry is remarkably similar in tone to much of Baudelaire's "Black Venus" love poetry in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Baudelaire's declaration "O vows! O perfumes! O kisses infinite!" in "Le Possédé" matches Image's feverish desire precisely.<sup>56</sup> Equally, Baudelaire's "Lethe" speaks of a desire

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<sup>54</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *The Poems of Selwyn Image* 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *The Poems of Selwyn Image* 4.

<sup>56</sup> Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* 75.

[...] to sleep and not to live!  
 And in a sleep as sweet as death, to dream  
 Of spreading out my kisses without shame  
 On your smooth body, bright with copper sheen.<sup>57</sup>

The almost tortuous level of exquisite desire in Image's poetry, the blending of agony with ecstasy, is also a recurrent, and much celebrated theme in the poetry of Swinburne. Hence, as with the more widely acknowledged poets of the British decadent era, such as Symons, Dowson and Wilde, the sensuality of Baudelaire and Swinburne is an identifiable feature of Selwyn Image's early bohemian poetry. Indeed the more subversive elements of these two European greats of erotic and sensuous poetry are also to be found in the writings of the recently de-frocked Reverend Image's work.

"Love's Carelessness" was sent to Mackmurdo on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1884, along with a covering letter. In the text, Image exposes a level of subversive intent with regard to the sensuality and moral implications of the poem. He introduces it as "a little poem on the well-worn subject which you may commend as you think to H. H. [presumably Horne] [...]. Of course I know you are too pure a person to have any sympathy with it yourself."<sup>58</sup> The theme continues in the same passionate and sensuous vein as those cited above, but closes with a stanza that introduces the notion of morality:

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<sup>57</sup> Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* 67.

<sup>58</sup> The Poems of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Poet d. 116, 28. The playful sarcasm of Image inferring Mackmurdo's purity is manifest in several letters where Mackmurdo is addressed as "Most Reverend Devilship" and even "You scandalous old corruptor of innocence." Letters of S. Image to A. H. Mackmurdo. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Letters e.39, 39-40 and 96.

In heaven or hell? Is it light of fire  
 Or light of the sun? desire on desire!  
 Be it hell's or heaven's love scorns to heed.<sup>59</sup>

In a philosophy similar to that of Walter Pater in his *Renaissance* (1873-93) therefore, for the one-time clergyman, notions of good and evil can be transcended by beauty and the sensuous life – again a central facet of Wilde's novel.<sup>60</sup>

In the introduction to Image's *Letters*, Mackmurdo states that his "passion for Beauty [...] led to the pursuit of Beauty in all its manifestations [...] wherever freely sought: In the features and figure of a girl, in the rhythm of the dance, in the voice of men and the song of a bird."<sup>61</sup> A letter to Mackmurdo of November 1883 ably demonstrates the effect of a beautiful girl upon the epicurean Mr. Image:

Lilith was with me this evening. I never saw her look anything like so lovely as she threw herself back in the chair draped in that Indian muslin dress with an exquisite piece of orange Indian silk held up off her head, and the heavy dusk hair lying away there underneath framing the shadowed face. O Lord! we are weak mortals – and all my strength went I can tell you – I think it must have been verily "grace" that kept me off then, and to all appearances collected. Heavens! if I could paint such a vision.  
 Dominus vobiscum.<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, it is not only the beauty of the female form that has such an effect on Image; writing to his cousin Katie in 1924, who was at the time visiting Italy, he told her

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<sup>59</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *The Poems of Selwyn Image* 6.

<sup>60</sup> This theme is predominant in Pater's depiction of Leonardo da Vinci, and will be explored in greater depth in later chapters.

<sup>61</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 9.

<sup>62</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 55.

Be sure you fall in love, or anyway do your hardest to fall in love, with Donatello's bronze Boy David in the Museo Nazionale – the naked lad with the helmet and laurel crown on his beautiful head [...] And tell the Boy how an old man in Holloway, London, adores him, and constantly refreshes his tired eyes by looking on him, though it be alas! in nothing but a photograph.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, writing to Mackmurdo from Rome, twenty one years earlier, in April 1883, Image displays his adoration of the young male form, and youth itself:

I haven't done a thing – except a few notes, and one or two pencil heads from the loveliest of boys, but I think I have drunk in some new life [...] Please give my best remembrances to Horn [sic], whom I, worn out with sins and follies and feebleness and waning years, envy for all his youth and energy and dawning brightness.<sup>64</sup>

In this letter the envy and near worship of youth, coupled with an eye for “the loveliest of boys,” strikes resonant chords with Wilde's Lord Henry in the opening chapters of *Dorian Gray*. Indeed, the “dawning brightness” of Horne's blossoming youth strongly prefigures Dorian's golden dawn in the first chapter of Wilde's novel. The beauty and vitality of youth appears to be an ongoing preoccupation with Image, as almost 20 years later, he writes to Christopher Whall, exclaiming “Oh! those sweet kids at the Grafton! what a ravishing thing is youth. I wonder how the Omega artists would interpret their legs?”<sup>65</sup> This fixation with young male bodies, and the typically Greek perception of the male as the principal form of beauty, may also be glimpsed in a letter to his brother John in 1882: having read Bret Harte's *Flip* (1882) to his sister Annie, Image confesses that “I am hopelessly in love with “Flip,” with her straight, slight figure like a boy's, and her freckles.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 97.

<sup>64</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 52.

<sup>65</sup> Letter to Christopher Whall, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1915, Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 161.

<sup>66</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 46.



The letter to Mackmurdo also shares other aspects with decadent writing. The idea of being “worn out with sins” and in one’s “waning years” while the writer was in his early thirties, recalls the playfully melodramatic *ennui* typical of much decadent writing of the time, as may be found in Arthur Symons’ “Satiety,” published when the poet was a mere 24 years old:

I have outlived my life [...]  
What joy is left in all I look upon?  
I cannot sin, it wearies me. Alas!<sup>67</sup>

Hence Image’s personal life and writings display many of the themes and influences of style that resonate throughout the British decadent movement. In his opposition to the growing puritanism in society, matters of sexuality and sensuality become ever more important modes of expression. For Mrs. Ormiston Chant, and the burgeoning movement she represented, the music halls and their dancers represented a sexual threat to society; Selwyn Image befriended and supported the ostracized dancers (even marrying one of their number) and defended the art of dance on the very basis of its sensuality. His poetry, richly sensuous, with passages bordering on the sexually explicit, along with his personal life, defies the rigid social mores of bourgeois late Victorian Britain.

More than this, Image’s love of “Beauty” in all his forms, led him to adore the masculine as well as the feminine – a social crime that became increasingly intolerable in the 1890s, as the excruciating word-by-word examination of Wilde’s

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<sup>67</sup> Arthur Symons, *Days and Nights* (London: Secker, 1923) 101.

depiction of Basil's feelings for Dorian during the first trial illustrates.<sup>68</sup> As mentioned above, many aspects of Wilde's personal and artistic philosophies may be found in the work of Selwyn Image. In the following chapters, the development of many themes in Wilde's work shall be examined through articles published in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*. Due to their many similarities, the magazine and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* shall be used to illuminate each other, highlighting common themes, and their evolution, as may be tracked in a quarterly periodical over a ten year publication history.

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<sup>68</sup> The words "madly," "adored," "loved" and "extravagantly" are put to Wilde by Carson in succession. See Merlin Holland, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde*, Foreword by Sir John Mortimer (London: Fourth Estate, 2003) 89-92.

## 1.2 Art for Art's Sake, Sensation for Sensation's: Aestheticism, Decadence and *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*.

Yes, there was to be, as Lord Henry had prophesied, a new hedonism that was to re-create life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely puritanism that is having, in our own day, its curious revival. It was to have its service of the intellect, certainly; yet it was never to accept any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience. Its aim, indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be. Of the asceticism that deadens the senses, as of the vulgar profligacy that dulls them, it was to know nothing. But it was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment.<sup>69</sup>

This passage, which first appeared on page 66 of the *Lippincott's* edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, marks a crucial turning point in Dorian Gray's life. From this moment on, Dorian indulges himself in every kind of experience, experiences many might class as "sinful," whereas before, his life had been centred around the detached appreciation and acquisition of all things beautiful. This movement from passivity to activity may be defined as a shift from the aesthetic to the decadent, the former denoting a detached appreciation of beauty and the latter an engaged, and even morally corrupt, behaviour – a movement from "art for art's sake" to "sensation for sensation's sake."

In many ways, the story itself marks a similar shift in Wilde's own status in society. As Jeremy Reed has noted, before the story's publication, Wilde was seen as "little more than an imposing colourful aesthete."<sup>70</sup> After its publication, however, many readers and critics sought to re-define their opinions of Wilde, as is illustrated by an article in the *St. James's Gazette*, June 1890:

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<sup>69</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Portrait of Dorian Gray and the Picture of Mr. W. H. [sic]* (Excerpts from *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 1890 and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 1889: Privately bound by Gleeson White, c. 1890) 66.

<sup>70</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ["Lippincott's Edition"] ([New York]: Creation, 2000) 6.

Time was [...] when we talked about Mr Oscar Wilde; time came [...] when he tried to write poetry and, more adventurous, we tried to read it; time is when we had forgotten him, or only remember him as the late editor of *The Woman's World* – a part for which he was singularly unfitted, if we are to judge him by the work which he has been allowed to publish in *Lippincott's Magazine* and which Messrs Ward, Lock & Co. have not been ashamed to circulate in Great Britain.<sup>71</sup>

Writing shortly after the *Lippincott's* publication, the *Daily Chronicle* described the work as “a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction” and the tale itself rife with “secret and unspeakable vice.”<sup>72</sup> For the *Scots Observer*, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1890, the book “deals with matters only fitted for the Criminal Investigation Department or a hearing *in camera*” and in an open accusation of homosexuality on Wilde’s part, describes him as being able to “write for none but outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph boys,”<sup>73</sup> recalling the recent case of the Cleveland Street homosexual brothel.<sup>74</sup> As Peter Ackroyd notes, therefore, “*The Picture of Dorian Gray* marked the first stage in Wilde’s long descent into open scandal and eventual infamy.”<sup>75</sup>

Wilde was seen as the figurehead of the British decadent movement, and as such, his behaviour and his writings were central to the movement’s appearance to the British public. Hence, like the smallest droplet sending out ever-increasing ripples on the surface of a pool, the above paragraph, when first published in the July edition of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 1890, has a much more wide-ranging significance than merely being a development in the plot, as Dorian’s “life,” Wilde’s life and the

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<sup>71</sup> Cited by Robert Mighall, Appendix 1, Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Robert Mighall. Penguin Classics, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 2003) 214.

<sup>72</sup> Cited Mighall, Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, ed. Mighall 217.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> The Cleveland Street scandal related to Lord Arthur Somerset’s alleged offences with telegraph boys at a homosexual brothel, resulting in his fleeing the country. For a detailed account of the scandal itself, and the supposed links between this historical event and Wilde’s fiction, see *CWOW*, III, xlvii-xlviii.

<sup>75</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Peter Ackroyd. Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) 8.

lives of British artists and writers of the *fin de siècle* undergo a “sea change” in public perceptions when art and morality become inextricably linked. Hence, Wilde’s crystallised moment in the life of Dorian Gray is emblematic of a wider movement in society at large.

One important aspect of periodical publications is that they offer a unique insight into cultural changes. A monthly or quarterly publication will reflect changes in society more immediately, as each issue is in itself a “cultural barometer,” reflecting and recording the environment in which it was produced. *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* ran from 1884 until 1894, the very period throughout which the arguments over morality and art were debated heatedly in Britain until the victory for bourgeois conservatism at Wilde’s trials in 1895.<sup>76</sup> The *Hobby Horse* is of particular interest in this case, as it was a periodical to which Wilde contributed. Upon reading the *Hobby Horse*, one becomes aware of developing themes and preoccupations amongst the writers and artists that contributed, and through their works one may glean an insight into contemporary issues in society at large. Having singled out Wilde’s moment of transition for Dorian, and his own transition in the eyes of his critics, it is possible to discern a more gradual movement from what may be termed “aesthetic” to what became typically known as “decadent” within the pages of the magazine itself.

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<sup>76</sup> Although technically running for 10 years, the publication’s central, uniform existence, was between 1886 and 1892. Prior to that a smaller, first number had been issued in April 1884 by G. Allen, Orpington, Kent. Following the last issued by the Guild itself, Elkin Mathews and John Lane published three more numbers from 1893-4, changing the name to *The Hobby Horse* along with the format, and losing most of the publication’s intrinsic aesthetic qualities. (This aspect of the Bodley Head *Hobby Horse* will be discussed in greater depth in later chapters.)

“Arthur H. Mackmurdo M. C. G.” (the suffix standing for “Member of the Century Guild”) announces the arrival of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* in April 1884 with the inaugural essay “The Guild’s Flag Unfurling” (2). Largely opposing the contemporary schools of Naturalism and Realism, the Guild’s work will be “characterized by its direct and new presentation of sentiment, rather than by its representation of external sources of sentiment in the material world.”

(Mackmurdo’s italics: April 1884, 9.) Apart from this artistic declaration, Mackmurdo stresses repeatedly the fraternal nature of the group: “one Guild – this super-sensuous sentiment” with “close pressing bonds of kinship and thought.” The Romantics are invoked in his statement that the Guild shall represent “creation only in the sense that Shelley uses the word” and in general the ethos of the magazine at its outset places the *Hobby Horse* firmly within the Arts and Crafts movement. The earlier issues are replete with articles claiming the superiority of the arts of the Middle Ages in such fields as architecture, fine art, music, embroidery, glazing and printing, amongst others, when compared to the lamentable state of contemporary nineteenth century work. This sentiment of a brotherhood of aesthetes, inspired by an older, chivalric code, and whose sacred quest is the recapture of Art’s rightful place at the heart of modern society, is wonderfully encapsulated in Arthur Galton’s (1852-1921) sonnet “To The Century Guild” (I, iii, 87):

The Faery Queene of Spencer’s mystic page  
Sent forth her Knights to deeds of old renown,  
Nobly they strove for her, her cause and crown  
Pretenders false they slew with righteous rage.  
Art is our Queen, for whom stern war we wage  
Against all those who dare to tread her down;  
Little reck we of stroke, or scoff, or frown,  
Who willingly for her our lives engage.  
Our Queen is bound; men traffic her for gold,  
Base traders hold her royal realms in fee,  
Some recreant Knights their brotherhood deny,

Others to Mammon their bright arms have sold.  
 Her loyal Knights are come to make her free,  
 They fight until her banner floats on high.

Oscar Wilde's article "Keats' Sonnet on Blue" precedes Galton's poem in the same issue, and reiterates the Guild's ethos in many ways. The article, centred around Mrs Speed's gift to Wilde of an original manuscript of Keats' sonnet, begins with a recollection of his lecture on "the Mission of Art in the Nineteenth Century" during his recent tour of America. Echoing Mackmurdo's earlier declarations opposing Realism, Wilde explains how the manuscript demonstrates that Keats' creative process is essentially "spiritual, not mechanical." He also reaffirms the Romantic connections of the magazine, not only in the fragmentary subject matter itself, but also by claiming that the differing versions of the sonnet allow an insight into Keats' creative process and are of "psychological interest" – this phrase being distinctly reminiscent of Coleridge's view of *Kubla Khan*'s intrinsic merit, after Byron urged him to publish the work.<sup>77</sup> The bulk of the article is taken up with the subtle differences between Wilde's manuscript and the two previously published versions of the sonnet found in Lord Houghton's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* (1848) and that in A. J. Horwood's copy of *The Garden of Florence*, as published in *Athenaeum*, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1876. Wilde refers to "printer's errors" in a footnote to page 84; he notes that the word "of" replaces "to," and "its" replaces "his" in the Horwood version. He goes on to state that "The 'Athenaeum' version inserts a comma after *art* in the last line, which seems to me a decided improvement, and eminently characteristic of Keats' method." (II, vii, 86. The importance of commas in this case recalls Wilde's languid response to a lady's declaration that

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<sup>77</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Christabel: Kubla Khan, A Vision; The Pains of Sleep* (London: Murray, 1816) 51.

“that boy [Wilde] must be working too hard.” Wilde agreed saying “I was working on a proof of one of my poems all the morning, and took out a comma. In the afternoon I put it back again.”)<sup>78</sup>

The overall result of Wilde’s article is to introduce the reader to tiny, yet treasured philological details. The tone of the piece and the specific changes to the manuscript depict Wilde as a man absorbed by minutiae, who finds beauty in the trivial and for whom Art is an end in itself. Though certainly an example of Wilde’s playful *sprezzatura*, the effect of this article, along with much of the writing in the *Hobby Horse*, depicts a closeted world of artists absorbed by aesthetics and largely removed from the concerns of the masses. However, a storm had been brewing that would eventually shatter the tranquillity of this ivory tower, and prove a formidable challenge for Galton’s Knights.

May 1885 saw the opening of the Academy’s annual exhibition in London and the London Press naturally covered the event, *The Times* including several articles detailing the various exhibitions therein. On Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May, “Having waited in vain for any public remonstrance,” the painter and treasurer of the Academy, John Callcott Horsley, masquerading as the now legendary “British Matron,” writing in *The Times*, began an attack upon the “indecent pictures that disgrace our

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<sup>78</sup> Phillipe Jullian, *Oscar Wilde*, 2nd ed. (London: Paladin-Granada, 1969) 63.



exhibitions.”<sup>79</sup> The “display of nudity at the [...] Academy” brought about in this unfortunate creature “a burning sense of shame” as the gallery itself became, for her, transformed into a Bosch-like vision of Hell, forcing her

to turn from them with disgust and cause only timid half glances to be cast at the paintings hanging close by [...] lest it should be supposed the spectator is looking at that which revolts his or her sense of decency.

Against this most vicious onslaught of indecency, the Matron announces that a “noble crusade of purity [...] has been started to check the rank profligacy that abounds in our land.” Over the following week, eighteen letters were printed by *The Times* debating nudity in art, before the editor announced that “We cannot publish any more letters on this subject” on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup>. Two thirds of the letters printed disagreed with the Matron, largely pointing to her lack of education, want of culture and the various flaws in her argument. Opposing letters came from artists such as Edward J. Poynter (whose work at the Academy included a nude based on the statue of the Equiline Venus), young girls, women, parents, and a scathing attack on bourgeois Christianity from Jerome K. Jerome, when he agreed with the Matron “that the human form is a disgrace to decency” but begged her not to castigate the artists “who merely copy Nature. It is God Almighty who is to blame in this matter for having created such an indecent object.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> A British Matron [John Callcott Horsley], “A Woman’s Plea: To the Editor of *The Times*,” *The Times* Wednesday May 20th 1885. Along with negative press reactions from the likes of *Punch*, who gave him the sobriquet “clothes-Horsley,” Whistler lampooned Horsley’s campaign, exhibiting “a pastel of a nude at the Society of Artists in December 1885 with a note attached reading ‘Horsley soit qui mal y pense.’” See Helen Valentine, “Horsley, John Callcott (1817-1903).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 3<sup>rd</sup> September. 2007 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33998>>. Alison Smith’s admirable account of the development of opposition to the nude in Victorian Britain illustrates how such a movement began several years before, however she states clearly that it was Horsley’s “British Matron” letter that acted as “the catalyst for igniting a national controversy around the exhibition of the nude.” See Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) 227.

<sup>80</sup> Jerome K. Jerome, “Nude Studies: To the Editor of *The Times*,” *The Times* May 23rd 1885.

However, the strength of language and the zealous fervour in those letters supporting the Matron spoke louder than any reasoned argument or wit. On Thursday 21<sup>st</sup>, “Clericus” lends his voice to the Matron’s cause, damning the paintings as “an outrage on decency and injurious to morality.”<sup>81</sup> The following day “Senex” expands on the issue of morality claiming that artists’ models are necessarily exploited, and likens their profession to that of prostitutes.<sup>82</sup> On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> “Another British Matron” claims that her predecessor’s letter was “an expression of the feelings of every right-minded man and woman.” Describing herself as a mother of children “whom I hope to train up to be an honour to their religion and their country” she launches into a tirade of breathtaking religious and nationalistic ire concerning the influence of nude paintings:

What has the passion for the nude in art done for our neighbours across the Channel that we should view without fear and alarm its introduction and spread among ourselves? [...] Our honour for ourselves, our love for our daughters, and our regard for the future welfare of our country, whose warriors, statesmen, and citizens are to be born of our daughters, compel us to decry and discountenance, with all our powers, these stealthy, steadfast advances of the cloven foot.<sup>83</sup>

Such nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments were calculated to touch several raw nerves at this particular moment in history. As the articles surrounding these letters in *The Times* demonstrate, Britain was feeling the Imperial strain of the war in The Soudan (General Gordon’s demise having occurred but four months earlier), the Afghan border crisis, anarchist dynamiters and ever-increasing problems in Ireland. British Imperialism, Hebraic Christianity (as Arnold might define it), social stability

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<sup>81</sup> Clericus, "To the Editor of *The Times*," *The Times* May 21st 1885.

<sup>82</sup> Senex, "To the Editor of *The Times*," *The Times* May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1885.

<sup>83</sup> Another British Matron, "Nude Studies: To the Editor of *The Times*," *The Times* May 23rd 1885.

and the great British family itself were under attack; and those foremost in the firing-line were those arch-purveyors of all that is evil and destructive – artists. Thus the Matrons’ “crusade of purity,” or as Wilde prefers in the above quotation, the “curious revival [of] uncomely puritanism” was well under way.

In August 1885 Selwyn Image wrote an essay entitled “On the Representation of the Nude” dealing specifically with matters raised in the letters to *The Times*, and it was published as the inaugural essay in the January issue of the *Hobby Horse*, 1886. Recalling his own inner struggle between religion and art, he clearly identifies the opposing parties of the sensuous world of Art, and a morality based on Christian teaching; yet his purpose in writing the essay is not to attempt to reconcile these opposed parties with Arnoldian, liberal rhetoric; rather he condemns those who try to do so:

I cannot help feeling [...] that when artists or critics or amateurs in general grow very contemptuous over such letters, and are indignant in their protests that all fine art tends towards fine morality, - by which they assume to understand *Christian* morality, - and that therefore these presentations of the nude, which may be undoubtedly fine art, tend towards fine morality, I cannot help feeling, I say, in part that they must consciously be posing. (I, i, 12.)

His argument rests upon the fact that the number of those for whom the appreciation of painted nudes is purely a matter of educated aesthetics – a detached appreciation of beauty itself – is remarkably small. For the many, in varying degrees, painted nudes must represent titillation, and he argues that

when you hear Christ say that even the imagination of fleshly indulgence is adultery, and that no adulterer can enter into his kingdom; when you know how the temptation to such imaginings is everywhere, and that yielding to it is the easiest and the commonest of human yieldings, the victory over it the hardest won of human victories:- with what sort of honour can you say [the “Lord’s Prayer”] while you put yourself at all events within the reach of sensuous allurements, and study the fascinations of nakedness? (I, i, 10.)

Prefiguring the decision made by Dorian Gray (and, indeed to some extent the semantics of its articulation) in the opening quotation, Image states that the Christian ideal “is an ascetic ideal [...] with the exuberant and joyous life of the senses, it is in perpetual and deadly antagonism.” (I, i, 9.) The life led in accordance to Art is necessarily sensuous, and therefore necessarily sinful. As in his “gospel of sensuousness, as the very foundation for fine art” given at Headlam’s meeting in 1889, to Image, popular Christianity and Art are fundamentally opposed and should remain so. His conclusion is not, therefore, one of reconciliation, but is simply a matter of choice: “We *must* make up our minds. It is a radical question in art come just now to the surface for us: and we must make up our minds what we ought to believe.” (I, i, 9.) Rather than countering the attack upon Art in the letters to *The Times*, the *Hobby Horse*, represented in Image’s essay, clearly seeks to further the divisions between Christian-based morality and Art.

However, Image’s writing, like the man himself, is intrinsically ambiguous. Much of his writing is open to misinterpretation, depending upon the level of insight in the reader. Many readers of Image’s essay have not realised which side of the divide Image himself was on. On Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January, *The Scotsman* reviewed the newly re-issued *Hobby Horse* and ridiculed Image’s “feeble article on the ‘Representation of the Nude,’ in which he takes the ‘British Matron’ of the *Times* to his heart.”<sup>84</sup> In a letter to Mackmurdo on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 1886, Image explains his position:

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<sup>84</sup> Cited Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 126.

No, I shall not die of the canny Scotchman's stabs. I would sooner certainly that people did not think me "gushing" and "frenzied" and "feeble" and an embracer of British Matrons: but if they do think it, it cannot be helped, and it will not upset my digestion.<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, a further letter to Mackmurdo around the same time parodies the British Matron's thesis in general, and Senex specifically. He writes to Mackmurdo anonymously, decrying the "immorality and indecency [...] obtruded on the eyes of our public" to be found in an illustration Mackmurdo submitted to the *British Architect*.<sup>86</sup> Senex's particular complaint is lampooned in the sorry tale of "a young girl for sale, some poor innocent plainly under the protected age of 16, whose winning smiles (sic) smites me to the heart in its unconsciousness of the hideous fate to which you and your accomplices are dragging her." The letter ends, "Repent ere it be too late. A Friend," and once more, if read by one ill-versed in Image's particular form of humour and rhetoric, may be received in precisely the opposite spirit to that intended.

Such mistaken readings of "On the Nude" have continued, with Lorraine Hunt claiming in 1965 that "the Pateristic art-for-art's-sake movement [...] was rejected by Selwyn Image in his essay 'On the Representation of the Nude'" as a foundation for her stoically determined view that "the actual art contents of the Hobby Horse do not suggest that the editors were preoccupied with questions of art and morality."<sup>87</sup> Yet as Image's struggle against the puritans over the music halls illustrates, it is the world of sensuousness and not that of religious bigotry and intolerance, which Image-the-artist is championing. As ever, one has only to examine his poetry to be convinced of the man's personal feelings on such matters. "For the Picture 'Monna

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<sup>85</sup> The Letters of S. Image to A. H. Mackmurdo. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Letters e.38, 188.

<sup>86</sup> The Letters of S. Image to A. H. Mackmurdo. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Letters e.38, 200.

<sup>87</sup> Hunt, "Century Guild Hobby Horse," 67.

Vanna' By D. G. Rossetti," dedicated to Mackmurdo in 1883, illustrates both his "gospel of sensuousness" and the fundamental opposition of morality based on the Gospels, and Art, as proposed in the essay above:

O God, O God, what hast thou done with peace

For one who hath gazed even once on her, felt her kiss,  
Felt her bared, glorious bosom fall and lift  
With passion of kisses? Felt?—nay, or dreamed like  
this,

Dreamed that he's seen her, touched her, held her, clung  
Till his body and soul were one with her, passed away  
Out of mind, out of sense, through a passion of nerves  
unstrung.<sup>88</sup>

Clearly, for Image, the temptation towards sexual fantasy offered by sensuous paintings was not merely to be defended, but to be positively revelled in. Ascetic, Hebraic Christianity is essentially opposed to the world of Art, and those who seek to defend the artistic world from modern society's attacks must necessarily oppose Christian teaching. Thus, with the battle lines well defined, Selwyn Image takes up a defiant stance against bourgeois morality based upon orthodox Christianity and exhorts his informed readers to do the same.

An important aspect of any periodical is the reader; the meanings of any article must be understood from within the context of its *implied* readership. As Ian Fletcher has noted, the *Hobby Horse*, along with other like-minded periodicals, suffered from the "decadent paradox" of trying to balance aesthetics with financial viability.<sup>89</sup> Due to its highly selective appeal, "300 seems to have been a typical circulation figure for

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<sup>88</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *The Poems of Selwyn Image* 7.

<sup>89</sup> Ian Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* (New York: Holmes, 1980) 174.

*CGHH*.”<sup>90</sup> Without doubt, the vast majority of those would have been like-minded artists of one colour or another. As such, Image’s article may be seen as something of a manifesto or rallying cry for the artists of *fin-de-siècle* Britain.<sup>91</sup> His is a defiant stance, and as such defines itself very much by what it opposes – i.e. puritanical, Protestant notions of morality. As sensuousness and sexuality are used by the opposition to damn the artistic lifestyle, so sensuousness and sexuality become blazons of the artist.<sup>92</sup>

Thus the transition from a detached aestheticism to a more consciously active “decadence” may be seen to take place in 1885 as artists react to their would-be oppressors, and art is forced to take account of morality with a distinct emphasis on the sexual life. Hence, the subject of art and morality, so masterfully transformed into the central conceit of Wilde’s fantastic novel and alluded to so disingenuously in his prefatory epigrams in the 1891 edition, first found its popular expression in the papers and periodicals of the mid 1880s; and the choice that Dorian Gray makes is emblematic of the choice forced upon many artists and aesthetes of the 1880s as the two sides became further entrenched.

Following Image’s essay, many other works included in the magazine may be seen as representing an emphasis on the sensual, and indeed the sexual, life in art, and depict a defiant reaction to the rising tide of puritanism. The 1888 annual edition includes several works depicting “unconventional” sexuality, such as the “ruined

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<sup>90</sup> Murray G. H. Pittock, *Spectrum of Decadence: Literature of the 1890s* (London: Routledge, 1993) 165.

<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Desmond Flower refers to the *Hobby Horse* and its contemporaries and descendents as “manifestos in the form of periodicals” in his introduction, Desmond Flower, ed., *The Poetical Works of Ernest Christopher Dowson*, 2nd ed. (London: Cassell, 1950) 15.

<sup>92</sup> Owen Burdett confirms this development, stating that during this period, “art and scandal come to be associated, and the imaginative life began to take vice for its province.” Cited by Peter Ackroyd in his introduction, Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, ed. Ackroyd 11.

maid” in Image’s poem “Refugium” and the headily sensuous fetishism in his “Of Her Heart-Shaped Locket, Worn Secretly in Her Bosom” (III, ix, 30). The same issue also includes Herbert Horne’s Hardy-esque tale of premarital sexuality bound up with the death of the beloved in “Amatar Loquitur” (III, x, 52). Ernest Dowson’s personal sexual psychology is reworked in his “A Case of Conscience” (IV, xiii, 2) as an Englishman abroad falls passionately in love with an underage French girl.<sup>93</sup> The same edition also saw the publication of his poetic masterpiece “Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae,” with its hypnotic refrain “I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion” (VI, xxii, 67).

Likewise, the artistic contributions to the *Hobby Horse* become increasingly sexualised, from the inclusion of Frederick Sandys’ luxuriously opulent “Danae in the Brazen Chamber” (III, xii, facing 147) to the erotic woodcuts reproduced from the 1499 Venetian printing of *The Hypnerotomachia* (IV, xv, facing 97).



Figure 1 - Sandys' *Danae in the Brazen Chamber* and a woodcut from *The Hypnerotomachia*, 1499. (Courtesy of Birmingham Central Library.)

<sup>93</sup> This theme, distinctly reminiscent of Dowson’s own experience, can be found reworked in similar pieces, such as “Apple Blossom on Brittany” in *The Yellow Book*, October 1894 and “Countess Marie of the Angels” in *The Savoy*, April 1896.



Volume four contains Charles Haslewood Shannon's supremely sensuous lithograph drawn on stone, "Umbilicus Tuus Crater Tornatilis, Numquam Indigens Poculis. Venter Tuus Sicut Acervus Trici, Vallatus Liliis" (VI, xxii facing 41).



Figure 2 - Shannon's *Umbilicus Tuus Crater Tornatilis ....* (Courtesy of Birmingham Central Library.)

This lengthy Latin title is taken from the Song of Solomon, 7: 2 in the Vulgate Bible, a common source of inspiration for many artistic works in the *Hobby Horse*:

Your navel is a rounded goblet  
that never lacks blended wine.  
Your waist is a mound of wheat  
encircled by lillies.<sup>94</sup>

In using such a scriptural quotation as his inspiration, Shannon is able to both expand upon the sexuality and sensuality in his art, whilst also condemning the hypocrisy of religiously inspired censorship. This double-edged use of scripture is common amongst many writers of the *fin de siècle*. The lavish sensuality of The Song of

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<sup>94</sup> I am indebted to Liz Evershed for providing me with this translation.

Solomon was championed by many seeking to expose the hypocrisy of puritanical Christianity, as it strove to expunge any expression of sensuous sexuality. Pierre Louÿs' infamous erotic epic, *Aphrodite* (1895), carried under the arm of the defiant Wilde as he was arrested, is a wonderful example of this technique. The entire text is a crescendo of sensuality and erotic suggestiveness, with the chapter "Demetrios' Dream" marking the apex. All the explicit details of the chapter's dizzying erotic heights are directly quoted from the Old Testament:

She throws her veil from her and stands in a narrow garment which clasps her legs and hips.

"I have put off my coat ;  
How shall I put it on?  
I have washed my feet ;  
How shall I defile them?

"My beloved put his hand  
By the hole of the door  
And my bowels were moved for him."

"I rose up to open to my beloved,  
And my hands dripped with myrrh,  
And my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh  
Upon the handles of the lock.  
Ah! let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth!"<sup>95</sup>

As Selwyn Image had made plain in his essay on "the Nude," Art and Christian *teaching* were fundamentally opposed with regard to sensuality. Hence the inherent sensuality, not to mention profound sexual deviancy, that may be found in Christian *scripture* became one of the most potent weapons in the artists' rhetorical armoury.

From within this air of sexual defiance amongst the artists of the later nineteenth century, flourished the now infamous homosexual counter-culture that would push against the boundaries of acceptable sexuality in Victorian Britain in such

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<sup>95</sup> Pierre Louÿs, *Aphrodite (Ancient Manners)* (New York: Privately Printed for Subscribers Only, 1928) 212-3.

publications as *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture* (1880-1894) and the ill-fated *Chameleon* (1894), before being crushed by a puritanical judiciary at Wilde's trials in 1895; and again, this may be seen within the pages of the *Hobby Horse*.<sup>96</sup> Ian Fletcher has remarked upon the growing "Uranian theme" in the magazine,<sup>97</sup> as is reflected in the inclusion of works by John Addington Symonds, Lionel Johnson, Simeon Solomon, John Gambril Nicholson and Charles Haslewood Shannon, amongst others. Indeed, the magazine included a few works that were quite explicit in their homosexual content. The 1890 annual includes both Symonds' homoerotic "Bion's Lament for Adonis" and Lionel Johnson's "In Praise of Youth" – a poem which would fit perfectly alongside the flagrantly homosexual works of Johnson's fellow Oxonians in *The Chameleon*:

Their eyes on fire, their bright limbs flushed,  
They dominate the night with love:  
While stars burn and flash above,  
These kindle through the dark such flame,  
As is not seen, and hath no name:  
Can night bear more? Can nature bend  
In benediction without end,  
Over this love of friend for friend?

The homosexual imagery is unmistakable. Indeed, the flame that "hath no name" would appear to prefigure Alfred Douglas's "Two Loves" published in *The Chameleon*, notable for being one of the poems used to damn Wilde by his prosecutors in 1895. The unpublished letters of Arthur Galton (held in the Dugdale collection) offer an intriguing insight into the authors' intentions in including such deviant material. Johnson wrote to Galton on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1890 claiming that the poem "touches, I trust, with delicacy, upon Greek virtue and Greek vice," making

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<sup>96</sup> The development of this sexual counter culture will be more fully explored in the following chapter.

<sup>97</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 183.

plain the poet's intention of expressing and promoting homosexuality in his work.<sup>98</sup>

Referring to the April issue of 1891, Johnson describes it as "a good number, but most indecent,"<sup>99</sup> and Simeon Solomon's distinctly androgynous "Bacchus," which opened the July issue of that year, elicited the response from Galton "will not the frontispiece be thought lewd? The title of it is unusually barbarous, even for the vulgate."<sup>100</sup> The "barbarous" title was not present in the final, published issue for July, but Solomon's provocative frontispiece remained.

The risk one took in using outlawed sexuality as a weapon against mainstream society by 1890 may be seen in the fact that Walter Pater declined Wilde's request to review *Dorian Gray* on account of it being "too dangerous" and he advised Wilde to excise the overt references to homosexuality.<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, alongside Wilde's revisions, and the addition of extra chapters and sub-plots, Wilde made one very telling alteration. The novel which Lord Henry gives to Dorian is described in the *Lippincott's* version as embodying the characteristics of "the finest artists of the French School of *Décadents*." (*CWOW*, III [1890], 103.) In the Ward, Lock and Co. novel edition of 1891 this school is changed to the "*Symbolistes*." (*CWOW*, III [1891], 274.) By 1890 the embodiment of subversive sexuality in art became popularly linked to the term "decadent" (as may be seen in the scathing reviews *Dorian Gray* received upon its publication)<sup>102</sup> and was therefore necessarily immoral, in the eyes of the more conservative elements in society. Karl Beckson has made the valid observation that "The attempt to state precisely what Decadence and

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<sup>98</sup> Cited Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 165.

<sup>99</sup> Cited Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 168.

<sup>100</sup> Letter to Horne, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1891, cited Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 169.

<sup>101</sup> See Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Norman Page (Ontario: Broadview, 2000) 276.

<sup>102</sup> See Appendix H, Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, ed. Page 171-7.

Aestheticism mean has led numerous literary historians to dash themselves on the semantic rocks.”<sup>103</sup> Though precise literary definitions of these terms will remain necessarily enigmatic, this transition within the pages of the *Hobby Horse* demonstrates the *reactive* quality of the movement perceived as “decadence.” As the aesthete strives to defend his use of the sensuous in artistic depiction, sensuality becomes the central theme of artistic expression, and the resultant works, necessarily more strident in their embodiment of the sensuous, are labelled morally “decadent” by detractors.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the transition Dorian Gray makes from the aesthetic appreciation of beauty, to the decadent life, centred on sensation and illicit sexuality in opposition to the prevailing puritanism, is representative of that taken by the wider circle of artists in *fin-de-siècle* Britain, from which the *Hobby Horse*’s contributors were drawn, as subversive sexuality became a weapon against the ascetic, Protestant morality that had its “curious revival” in late Victorian society. The war between the puritans and the artists was well defined by the turn of the last Victorian decade, and they were fighting along the battle-lines drawn up by Selwyn Image in 1885.

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<sup>103</sup> Karl Beckson, ed., *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Academy, 1993) xi.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph Bristow confirms this aspect of decadence being a perceived quality, rather than one formulated and espoused by the artist himself, stating that “the French literary and cultural movement called Decadence obtained its name from hostile critics” who opposed the works of Verlaine, Huysmans and Maurice Barres. See *CWOW*, III, 394.

### 1.3 Socrates at Oxford and the Portrait of the Adored: Hellenism and Homosexuality in the *Hobby Horse*.

*The Century Guild Hobby Horse* is in many ways a product of late-Victorian Oxford. Many of its contributors attended Oxford colleges: Wilde at Magdalen, Charles Kegan Paul at Exeter, Ernest Dowson at Queens, Selwyn Image, Lionel Johnson and Arthur Galton all attended New College, and A. H. Mackmurdo, “matriculated at Oxford in order to be able to attend [Ruskin’s] lectures, and in 1874 accompanied him on a trip to Italy.”<sup>105</sup> In addition to that other great Oxonian sage, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin was persuaded to contribute to the *Hobby Horse* by his former pupils and admirers among the magazine’s coterie of writers, who themselves contributed many works praising their former masters. Reviews of performances at Oxford, such as “Strafford” and the “Alcestis,” grace the magazine’s pages (V and II respectively), and Ian Fletcher, illustrating the fact that the *Hobby Horse*’s somewhat meagre sales belie a far wider readership, recounts that the magazine was something of a fixture in “Oxford Common Rooms,” throughout its publication history.<sup>106</sup>

Hence Oxford, and specifically Victorian Oxonian philosophy, may be seen as being major shaping influences upon the *Hobby Horse* itself. This is of profound importance when considering matters of sexuality, and specifically homosexuality, within the magazine as a whole. In her masterful work *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, Linda Dowling illustrates how, under the guidance of Benjamin Jowett (1817-93) at Balliol College, the curriculum shifted in

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<sup>105</sup> Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 58.

<sup>106</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 183.

focus from the grammar of the Classics to Greek philosophy itself. In tandem with this change, the tutorials emphasising the importance of friendship in bringing about “mental illumination” that were a product of the Oxford Movement, developed into a more Socratic model of the intimate relationship between master and pupil.<sup>107</sup>

This took place during a period of great anxiety over the “state of England,” as modern, industrialised society began to change on a phenomenal scale and at an unprecedented rate. To the intellectual elite of Oxford, the rushing tide of utilitarian, middle-class conformity could only lead to the mental stagnation of the country, and by extension, its Empire:

Driven by the widening prosperity spread by the railway and shipbuilding boom of the 1830s, the demand for social acceptance on the part of hitherto disdained or excluded social classes was [...] encouraging and calcifying a regime of respectability. It was “a narrow and shallow system, that Protestant philosophy,” as Newman called it, and it “forbids all the higher and more noble impulses of the mind, and forces men to eat, drink, and be merry, whether they will or no.”<sup>108</sup>

To the later liberal reformers of Oxford, as Matthew Arnold frequently stated, it would be “the quality of its *ideas*” rather than the “mere quantity of its railways or factories or people” that would ensure England’s glorious future.<sup>109</sup> Diversity and individualism were stressed as being of vital importance to England’s strength (the Darwinian terminology befitting the era) as the Oxford university reform movement of the 1850s and 1860s sought to widen the competition for college fellowships. Oriel and Balliol led the way as Oxford opened up its gates to “more poor students and, for the first time [...] non-Anglicans” as a means of “breaking up the

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<sup>107</sup> See chapters 2 and 3 of Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (New York: Cornell UP, 1994) 32-66, 67-103.

<sup>108</sup> Newman’s “Antony in Conflict” from *The Church of the Fathers* (1833), cited Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* 39.

<sup>109</sup> Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* xiv.

intellectually desolating regime” of “snobbery and extravagance” which typically favoured “orthodox and aristocratic elements.”<sup>110</sup>

This move from social type to the individual, regardless of social type, stressed the *personality* of the applicant as the defining aspect of any prospective student.

Indeed, the personalities of both student and teacher were of paramount importance to the educational process, Newman’s tutorials being defined by an atmosphere “of intimacy, and friendship, and almost of equality.”<sup>111</sup> This old, Tractarian view of the “intense ‘communion of souls,’ and the belief in ‘personality’” that defined the college tutorials was appropriated by later masters such as Jowett and Mark Pattison (1813-84). For Pattison, “the personal influence of mind upon mind [...] the mind of the fully instructed upon the young mind it seeks to form” was central to the educational process.<sup>112</sup> Such statements ring out with Socratic harmonies, and to pupils such as John Addington Symonds and Walter Pater, the relationship between *what* they were being taught, and *how* they were being taught it, was not lost.

Throughout their process of education, as both students and then later tutors, Pater and Symonds saw the Socratic system of mentor and pupil being *enacted* as well as being part of the curriculum. Hellenism moved from being an historic study of thought to a vibrant and creative way of life. In *The Symposium*, Plato speaks of this creative dialectic and specifically uses sexual discourses to describe the process of education of which Symonds and Pater felt themselves to be part:

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<sup>110</sup> Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* 63.

<sup>111</sup> Cited Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* 41.

<sup>112</sup> Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* 65.



Those whose creative instinct is physical have recourse to women, and show their love in this way, believing that by begetting children they can secure for themselves an immortal and blessed memory [...] but there are some whose creative desire is of the soul, and who long to beget spiritually, not physically, the progeny which it is the nature of the soul to create and bring to birth. If you ask what that progeny is, it is wisdom and virtue in general [...] By intimate association with his friend, and by keeping him always before his mind, he succeeds in bringing to birth the children he has long desired to have [...] and shares their upbringing with his friend; the partnership between them will be far closer and the bond of affection far stronger than between ordinary parents [...] Everyone would prefer children such as these to children after the flesh.<sup>113</sup>

As Dowling states, Pater and Symonds “would deduce from Plato’s own writings an apology for male love as something not only noble but infinitely more enobling than an exploded Christianity and those sexual taboos and legal proscriptions inspired by its dogmas.”<sup>114</sup> According to Plato, Greek Philosophy and “Greek Love” all came as part of one package. Seeing their intense and intimate tutorials beget the wisdom and nourish the individual personality that Plato spoke of, Pater and Symonds “would come to assert, in all seriousness, that the Socratic eros was essential to the survival of liberal England.”<sup>115</sup>

Publications such as *The Chameleon* illustrate the continued advocacy of homosexuality within undergraduate Oxford, but in the *Hobby Horse*, alongside a few overt displays of homosexual love (such as Johnson’s poem quoted above), one may discern a distinctively Oxonian view of Art, and specifically artists, that displays all the hallmarks of this Socratic philosophy. Walter Pater’s *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* may be regarded as something of a “template” for this Socratic view of Art born of late-Victorian Oxford, warranting a short exploration of his methods and their reception before examining the later works in the *Hobby Horse*.

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<sup>113</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Walter Hamilton, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, nd) 90-1.

<sup>114</sup> Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* xiv.

<sup>115</sup> Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* 80.

The philosophy that is the backbone of the work is pure Socratic Hellenism, which Pater saw as the fount from which the new knowledge in the Renaissance sprang. This anomaly between the title and the true message of the book was rounded upon by Pater's many critics. Emilia Pattison (née Strong, and wife of Mark Pattison), writing for the *Westminster Review*, lambasted the work on the grounds that

The title is misleading [...] the work is in no wise a contribution to the history of the Renaissance. For instead of approaching his subject [...] by the true scientific method, through the life and time of which it is an outcome, Mr. Pater prefers in each instance to detach it wholly from its surroundings, to suspend it isolated before him.<sup>116</sup>

The true subject of Pater's work is a philosophy, and not an historical period in art and literature. This is clearly demonstrated in his inclusion of the chapter on "Winckelmann" – a man born several centuries too late for the historical Renaissance, but who embodies Pater's creed of the Socratic way of life. Winckelmann is to Pater what the Grecian Urn is to Keats – a fragment of the Hellenic world preserved into (near) modernity. A quintessential element of Winckelmann's innate Hellenism is his sexuality: "his affinity with Hellenism was not merely intellectual [...] proved by his romantic, fervent friendships with young men. He has known, he says, many young men more beautiful than Guido's archangel." (*WPR*, 152.) Winckelmann is an honorary member of the Renaissance movement on account of his personal embodiment of the Hellenic creed which defined the Renaissance, a creed that necessarily embodies homosexuality.

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<sup>116</sup> R. M. Seiler, ed., *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1980) 71.

Hence Pater's work is not simply an examination of art and literature, but is more an analysis of the kind of *personalities* that gave birth to the movement in art and literature bearing the historical name "Renaissance," his analysis of each individual personality constituting Mrs Pattison's "detached isolation" from historical context.

Probably the supreme example of his method of painting the personality to illustrate the art is to be found in his chapter on Leonardo Da Vinci. From the outset, Pater seeks to paint afresh the grandest of European artistic Masters, theorising Leonardo's boyhood:

No portrait of his youth remains; but all tends to make us believe that up to this time some charm of voice and aspect [...] had played about him.

We see him [...] fascinating all men by his beauty, improvising music [...] fond of odd bright dresses and spirited horses. (*WPR*, 85, 79.)

In his use of the present tense to describe the young painter, Pater gives his subject an immediacy which forces the reader to assess Leonardo anew – as a distinct, accessible *personality* and not a distant Grand Master that one must approach with reverential awe. This aesthetic, rather than critical, style of portraiture earned Pater the scorn of many a critic: to Mrs Oliphant, writing in *Blackwood's*, it constituted "graceful but far-fetched fancies,"<sup>117</sup> to W. J. Courthope in the *Quarterly Review* it is "pure romance," with Pater assuming "a knowledge [...] beyond the reach of evidence,"<sup>118</sup> and to Sarah Wister in the *North American Review*, "Mr Pater seems bent on weaving veils of mist and moonlight."<sup>119</sup> Yet Pater's negative critics do in fact uncover the reality of his work from underneath its disingenuous title.

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<sup>117</sup> Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 91.

<sup>118</sup> Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 93.

<sup>119</sup> Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 105.

Examining Pater's essay on Botticelli, Mrs Oliphant berates Pater's "sheer determination to confer upon this primitive teacher some 'unique faculty', [sic] which no one else has divined, and to find out for him a special virtue which shall act upon Mr. Pater's Me in a distinct and recognizable way."<sup>120</sup> Pater's Renaissance portraits are unique personalities whose *lives* make them great – the artwork being simply an inevitable, great product of the greater *personality*. Botticelli, Leonardo and Winckelmann's greatness does not lie solely in their works, but in their personal philosophy of life, and to Pater, it is in studying the personality of the artist that the student has most to gain – Oliphant's "Me" referring to Pater's Oxonian-Platonic sense of personality. The fact that this Hellenic philosophy was quintessentially Oxonian is also illustrated by Pater's critics, Mrs. Oliphant again stating that

The conclusion of this very artificial book has a curious kind of human interest in it, as showing what Greek – not the language but the tone of mind and condition of thought, taken up a thousand years or so too late, on the top of a long heritage of other thoughts and conditions – may bring Oxford to.<sup>121</sup>

The artist becomes the master and Pater and his readers the pupils, as the Socratic template is played out throughout the pages of *The Renaissance*; but of course, these masters are, to a degree, literary creations of Pater, and hence there is a multiplicity of artist-teachers and portrait-pupils: Pater claims to be illustrating a worthy philosophy found in the personalities of the great artists, but as his critics cited above so ably demonstrate, it is Pater who is the artist in much of the biographical content of the book, with the artists themselves constituting the subjects that he paints for the reader.

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<sup>120</sup> Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 88.

<sup>121</sup> Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 90.

The analogy of the Socratic mentor and pupil with the artist and his subject is a central facet of Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, as both Lord Henry and Basil "create" Dorian in their own image – and the physical Dorian, shaped by Henry, becomes interchangeable with the portrait, given shape by Basil. Both the Artist and the Philosopher are Lover-Fathers to Dorian. Within the *Hobby Horse*, one may trace the development of such archetypes, as the Oxonian and Paterian influences on its contributors are displayed in many such Lover-Father relationships amongst artists and philosophers.

That Walter Pater and his philosophies shaped at Oxford are distinct influences on the *Hobby Horse* is beyond doubt: Arthur Galton's two essays "The Italian Renaissance" (II, v, 20) and "Some Thoughts About that 'Movement,' which it is that Present Fashion to Describe as 'The Renaissance' and to Admire Inordinately" (V, xvii, 15) both strike resonant chords with Pater's own work on the subject. His critical style is praised by Lionel Johnson in "A Note, Upon Certain Qualities in the Writings of Mr. Pater; as Illustrated by His Recent Book" (V, xvii, 36) and again in Selwyn Image's review of *Imaginary Portraits* (1887; III, ix, 14). Pater's essay titled *Style* (1888) is also debated by John Addington Symonds in his article, "Is Music the Type or Measure of All Art?" (III, x, 42.) However, a closer reading of the texts of the magazine reveals more ingrained influences of both Pater and the Oxonian-Socratic philosophy that shaped him and his work. The *Hobby Horse* is replete with biographical works on great writers and artists throughout its publication history, and many of these biographical writings display distinct similarities with Pater's techniques in *The Renaissance*.

Arthur Galton's heartfelt and scholastic eulogy "Matthew Arnold; His Practice, Teaching, And Example: An Essay on Criticism" is one such work. As shall be explored in later chapters dealing with Galton's religious convictions, Arnold is Galton's greatest teacher, and spiritual saviour: "that I held on to any sort of Christianity [...] I owe entirely to Matthew Arnold [...] He taught me how to think, and how to write."<sup>122</sup> To Galton, Arnold is beloved master, friend, and near deity as "everything he handled became fascinating and beautiful." (III, xi, 83.) The key to Arnold's greatness is his "distinct personality" (III, xi, 86) and, like Pater's portraits of his great masters, Galton strives to discover Arnold's "most individual and distinguishing quality" (III, xi, 84). Recalling Mrs. Oliphant's criticism of Pater's "Botticelli," Galton tells the reader that "Constantly, in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read." (III, xi, 97.) The worth of poetry for Galton, as with that of Botticelli's work for Pater, is to be found in the measure of how much it contributes to the "self" of the reader – the "strength and joy to be drawn from it." Thus the study of poetry should contribute to the development of one's own personality, when under the tutorship of a suitably enlightened master. In exploring the development of the self through studying poetry, Galton even quotes Pater's essay on Leonardo, claiming that "'The way to perfection is through a series of disgusts,' as Mr. Pater so admirably expresses it" (III, xi, 98), furthering the links between his own work and Pater's creed of the Hellenic way of life.

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<sup>122</sup> Arthur Galton, *Rome and Romanizing: Some Experiences, and a Warning* (London: Skeffington, 1900) 38.

Pater's insistence upon one's personal perception of the artist under scrutiny is touchingly summed up in Galton's simple statement, desiring that "I may say what I feel about Matthew Arnold" (III, xi, 100); and in what follows, the relationship between Galton and Arnold is made plain. Galton writes that Arnold "is most classical when he is most personal," and the parallels between his Arnold, and Pater's Winckelmann, start to emerge when he states that "Matthew Arnold [...] has made the great style current in English" when discussing the classical style in modern English literature. Indeed, Arnold's purpose in life is seen as being "To convey the message of the ancients whom he loved so well" to those living in modernity (III, xi, 102). Hence Arnold, like Winckelmann, was a fragment of the Hellenic world amid crass Victorian Britain, and Galton paints his portrait of his adored master with the boldest of Hellenic brushstrokes: Speaking of him as one who revealed "plain but disturbing and uncomfortable truths," he states that so often, those criticised, "Instead of feeling sorry for themselves at being wrong [...] fly into a rage with the person who points out their evil plight; it is very human [...] and at least as old as the time of Socrates" (III, xi, 105-6). Galton's beloved mentor is thus compared directly to Socrates himself, and the value of Arnold's personal approach to education mirrors that of the Socratic tutorials espoused by Jowett and Pattison: "His influence is one of the finest of intellectual disciplines, simply because he does not set himself up for being a master; he gives his readers, not rules, but flexibility of mind and keenness of perception" (III, xi, 106). As with the tutorial template set by Newman, Arnold facilitates the development of the pupil's personality in an environment of warm friendship, and near equality. Indeed, the profound sense of union between master and pupil was remarked upon by Galton whilst composing the piece: Writing to Horne he claimed that "If I were a believer in spiritualism, I should

think that Matthew Arnold had been standing over me, forcing me to write what he felt about his own work, and things in general.”<sup>123</sup> In such sentiments, the distinction between master and pupil, artist and portrait, are all but eradicated.

Volume V of the *Hobby Horse* (1890) includes another of Galton’s tributes to his former master – “Some Letters of Matthew Arnold” (xviii, 47). In these letters, Galton seeks to illustrate for the reader Arnold’s interest in the magazine as a whole, and Galton in particular. Arnold offers to do what he can to advertise the *Hobby Horse* to American readers in the first letter (V, xviii, 48), but the constant thread throughout all the letters is Arnold and Galton’s pet dogs. On page 49 Arnold states that “we all send our sympathy to Port [Galton’s dog] – affectionate sympathy,” clearly illustrating Arnold’s personal acquaintance with Galton. The following letter reveals that “Port has come round,” but lamentably that the Arnolds have “just lost our dear, dear mongrel, Kaiser, and we are very sad.” Galton, we are told, replies offering him “another dachs hound, Hans” and is at pains to point out that “the next letter refers to a box of fritillaries; Oxford fritillaries”:

My Dear Galton,  
You could not have sent me a prettier and pleasanter present. The purple flowers are come out today, and I think the white ones will come out to-morrow. They are all beautiful. Ever truly yours, MATTHEW ARNOLD.

You shall hear about Hans as soon as quarters are prepared for him. (V, xviii, 50)

Galton uses these letters to illustrate the largely unseen private personality of the great man, but the most striking aspect of these letters is the level of intimacy between Galton and Arnold. Having already compared Arnold to Socrates in the

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<sup>123</sup> Letter to Horne, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1888, Dugdale collection, cited Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 151.



earlier piece, the profound intimacy between master and pupil recalling that of Socrates and Phaedrus – the template for the Oxonian tutorial – is plainly evident. Although there is no cause whatever to suspect a sexual element in this relationship, the deep love between the men cannot be denied.<sup>124</sup>

Frederic Shields' similar works on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, however, paint this love of a man for his artistic master in much more vivid colours. "Some Notes on Dante Gabriel Rossetti" (I, iv, 140) opens with the statement that

The following notes [...] were taken in all the warmth of enthusiasm elicited by that revelation, in unclouded brilliancy, of the great sun whose glory the Art world had heretofore only partially inferred from transient gleams. They were the spontaneous expression of joy of the disciple at the fully displayed potency of one who, from my first knowledge of himself, had granted me the rich honour of a friendship that delighted to load me with such benefits as he alone had power to bestow.

The use of imagery such as "great sun," "unclouded brilliancy," "revelation" and bountiful gifts "he alone had power to bestow" clearly paint Rossetti as a god. This religious aspect to the relationship is confirmed in Shields' description of himself as a "disciple," that word also being used to illustrate the level of intimacy between the two men, that "rich honour of a friendship" granted to the young painter by his deified master.

From the outset, Shields strives to depict Rossetti's *personality*, rather than give an account of his artistic capabilities, very much akin to Pater's style in the *Renaissance*: "Rossetti was absolutely free from envy, so large-hearted in his ungrudging eulogies of others and their work, that his memory, of all men's I have

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<sup>124</sup> These two works by Galton were reprinted by Elkin Mathews under the title *Two Essays upon Matthew Arnold with Some of His Letters to the Author* (London: Mathews, 1897).

ever known, has the noblest title to a generous appraisalment.” (I, iv, 140.) Passing over Rossetti’s artistic achievements almost entirely, Shields continues his eulogy to the man himself, stating that he was “bountiful in relieving the distressed” be they nought but “mere acquaintances [...] taking counsel and pains to discover by what means he could most efficiently lift them out of their adversity.” (I, iv, 141.)

However, “if the trouble was that of a close friend, he importuned, both personally and by correspondence, his whole circle of intimacy until he had the joy of accumulating relief more substantial than his own means could afford.” (I, iv, 141-2.)

Thus, like Pater’s harbingers of the Renaissance, it is his unique qualities as an individual that give rise to the “imaginative originality” in Rossetti’s work (I, iv, 149).

Within his work, Rossetti had a personal “goal of perfect beauty,” (I, iv, 141) beauty being the very essence of the Hellenic life as defined by Plato and the goal to which one’s life must constantly strive for Pater. The “Socratic tutorial” relationship that Shields saw as existing between him and his former master is emphasised in another homage to Rossetti in the 1890 annual of the *Hobby Horse*. Lamenting the fact that the “conditions of the Age, in which we live, are adverse to immediate tradition from Master to Pupil,” Shields takes it upon himself to pass on his former master’s techniques in “A Note Upon Rossetti’s Method of Drawing in Crayons” (V, xviii, 70). The creative dialectic of this relationship between the older and younger artist is illustrated in the fact that Shields claims his sketch of Blake’s work-room inspired Rossetti to compose his poem “William Blake” – the poem representing the intellectual progeny of their intimacy. Shields’ depiction of Rossetti bestowing near-divine gifts upon him illustrates the extent to which the older artist may be seen as

the “spiritual father” of much of Shields’ own work, as indeed he is to these very pieces Shields contributes to the *Hobby Horse*.

The divine aspect of Shields’ Rossetti is a constant theme throughout his two works on the artist. Rossetti is depicted as being almost omnipresent, with regard to his “imaginative vision,” as we are told that “All is present before him, and he shall show you all,” the latter statement again emphasising the revelatory nature of the great artist’s personality. This religious aspect is re-enforced by the use of phrases such as “Let us look together at this unoppressed freedom of imagination” (I, iv, 148), and Shields’ inclusion of another, anonymous, disciple’s words, who exhorts the reader to “render thanks for the genius that was empowered to create so much loveliness” (I, iv, 154), which both add to the feeling of religious worship.

Such deification of an artistic mentor is strongly reminiscent of the “Eagle Street College” in their adoration of Walt Whitman. John Johnson’s confession “How I love and honour him” and W. T. Hawkins’ poem written to celebrate Whitman’s birthday “To dear, dead Walt, who, being dead, yet speaks” both entwine notions of the religious with the adoration of the beloved mentor, within an atmosphere of homosexuality.<sup>125</sup> Although there is no direct evidence to suppose a homosexual aspect in his adoration of Rossetti, Shields’ own sexuality is somewhat ambiguous: like his friend and admirer, John Ruskin, Shields was enamoured with a very young girl, the “child model” Matilda Booth, whom he finally married when she turned 18, Shields himself being then 41. Like Ruskin’s marriage to Effie Gray (though

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<sup>125</sup> John Johnson, Manuscript Diaries, Tuesday 26 August 1890 and W. T. Hawkins untitled poem “read at Walt Whitman’s birthday celebration, 31 May 1906, from *Annandale Observer* 15 June 1906.” Chris White, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1999) 219-222.

somewhat longer) the relationship ended with the young wife leaving her husband, and P. G. Konody and Vivien Allen state that many of Shields' friends were "astonished" by the marriage, thinking him "uninterested in women."<sup>126</sup> This would suggest a level of sexual ambiguity generous enough to allow a homoerotic reading of Shields' writings on Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Certainly, all the other hallmarks of the Platonic love between master and pupil are evident, and the whole does imply the total adoration of one man by another.<sup>127</sup>

The fact that Shields did *not* attend Oxford only serves to illustrate how extensively this Socratic template of the master-pupil relationship had been absorbed into the artistic community represented in the *Hobby Horse*. However, the last of the biographies here examined is rooted firmly within the grounds of Oxford itself.

John Ruskin's article, "Arthur Burgess" (II, vi, 46), is quite possibly the most curious piece of writing in the entire run of the *Hobby Horse*. The fact that it was written during a period of severe mental illness for Ruskin may explain some of its oddity; and the status of Ruskin as an authority on Art at the time may be seen as reason enough for *any* article of his to be included in the magazine. However, this strange, nostalgic musing over a lost friend crystallizes the homoerotic aspect of the Socratic mentor-pupil relationship as it existed in Oxford in the 1870s, possibly revealing another reason for the article's inclusion by members of the editorial team.

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<sup>126</sup> P. G. Konody and Vivien Allen, "Shields, Frederic James (1833-1911)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 19<sup>th</sup> April. 2005 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36067>>.

<sup>127</sup> A further representation of Rossetti within the pages of the magazine plays with the idea of the mentor and pupil/artist and model relationship becoming interchangeable when a pupil seeks to portray his or her beloved master. Although flying in the face of Socratic sexuality, Rossetti's ink sketch, *Miss Siddall Drawing Rossetti* (II, vii, to face 91) depicts his wife-to-be drawing a picture of himself, creating a "Russian doll" multiplicity of artists and subjects, with the artist painting a picture of the lover painting a picture of the artist.

Ruskin's own words about the man reveal little more than the writer's own mental state at the time of composition. He is filled with regret at not having given more time to his former companion (now deceased), a loathing of his own works and a peculiar, doom-laden fear of certain paintings by Blake – works which both men owned independently at various times. However, the article's centrepiece is in fact the work of Selwyn Image,<sup>128</sup> whom Ruskin quotes anonymously. Although the article does include several examples of Burgess's woodcuts, the inclusion of this lengthy, incredibly intimate, testimony demonstrates Ruskin and Image's desire to illustrate the artist's *personality* above all.

After outlining Burgess's involvement with Ruskin and his works, we are told that "Mr. Burgess came down sometimes to Oxford [...] and formed his own circle of friends there," and Ruskin's intensely self-deprecatory, even flagellatory, mood is demonstrated as he introduces Image's work: "I am thankful to associate with the expression of my own, imperfect, blind, and unserviceable affection, that of the deeper feeling of one who cared for him to the end," (II, vi, 48) suitably framing this analepsis within a mood of loss and regret. The following is a recollection of the first meeting between Image and Burgess, "at a man's rooms in Queen's":

I not only breakfasted with him; we spent the whole day together; we went out for a long walk, talking of Art, of Religion, of all manner of things. Immediately and immensely I was attracted to him, attracted by his width of view, his serious feeling, his quick humour, which was abounding, attracted perhaps above all by his generous acceptance of me: but I little guessed that on that day had begun one of the most valuable, and the closest, and the dearest friendships, that I shall ever know.

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<sup>128</sup> See John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, vol. 24, 39 vols. (London: Allen, 1904) xxxii.

After I had left Oxford we came gradually to see one another very often: as the years went by our intimate relationship increased. We entered into one another's lives, if I may say so, absolutely. There was not a care, an expectation, a work, an interest of any kind of importance, which we did not share. We trusted one another so thoroughly, that I am sure there was nothing about myself that I cared to hide from him; and I believe that there was little about him, that he hid from me. (II, vi, 48-9.)

Probably the most striking aspect of this biographical account of the artist's life is the fact that not one word is said about his art. The personality of the artist is not merely central, but it is the *only* feature of this meta-narrative. In his confession that he was attracted partly by Burgess's "generous acceptance of me" and his later statement that "No one ever went to him in trouble or for advice, but he gave them generously and cheerfully all that was in his power to give them," (II, vi, 50) Image's praise for Burgess strongly resembles that of Frederic Shields for Rossetti; however, the depth of feeling between the two men is much more overt in Ruskin's article.

Image speaks of Burgess in tones akin to a lover's devotion to the beloved. Their first meeting – "Immediately and immensely I was attracted to him" – displays a profound intensity of feeling, and the exquisite agony of romantic loss is captured perfectly in the confession that "I little guessed that on that day had begun the most valuable [...] closest [...] dearest friendship [...] I shall ever know." This romantic attachment is compounded by the statement that, after Oxford, "our intimate relationship increased. We entered into one another's lives, if I may say so, completely." These phrases could be read as a covert admission of homosexual love, and Image's devotional portrait of the artist's character adds yet further weight to such a reading. We are given a tantalisingly obscure account of Burgess's honour in the statement that "I have known him suffer the loss of a friendship, which was very dear to him, and endanger another, rather than break a promise of silence." (II, vi, 50.) The idea of secrets, promises of "silence," and endangered "friendships" within

Oxford all point towards a homosexual subtext, and indeed recall Pater and Symonds' disastrous attempts to put their theoretical philosophy of a justification for homosexuality into practice; such phraseology also foreshadows the dark world of Dorian Gray's secret life when friendships and reputations are lost or destroyed by Dorian's unstated sins and secret knowledge.<sup>129</sup>

As Wilde daringly explored issues of morality in his novel, Image takes great pains to stress his own hero's particular moral integrity:

he had powers so rare, and virtues so fine, that I am afraid it would sound mere exaggeration, if I said all the good that I knew of him [...] No man, I believe, ever breathed, whose spiritual and moral instincts were more delicate. (II, vi, 49.)

Such strenuous defence of Burgess's "virtues" and "spiritual and moral instincts" suggests that others might see reasons for calling these into question; but Image is seeking here to separate the man's personality from his actions. He freely admits that "He had a great many weaknesses, and great faults," and that "he did foolish things, and, it may be, unworthy things," yet asks that Burgess's character be not judged solely upon these actions. Presumably these "unworthy things" are at odds with his underlying "spiritual and moral instincts," thereby causing others to damn the man Image is trying to defend. This impressionistic portrait of Burgess's illicit actions and inherent morality is given further colour when one examines Selwyn Image's later defence of Wilde; the sentiments, and indeed the semantics, are

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<sup>129</sup> Chapter 12 of the expanded version of *Dorian Gray* includes Basil Hallward's cross-examination of Dorian's moral character, whereby he lists many secret scandals in which Dorian's name has been implicated. Basil's question "Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide" and his statement that Lord Kent was "broken with shame" on account of Dorian's dealing with his only son, are strongly suggestive of homosexual scandal. Equally Allan Campbell, the chemist who destroys Basil's corpse, declares "I entirely decline to be mixed up in your life. Keep your horrible secrets to yourself" before Dorian blackmails him by means of yet another, unstated secret. *CWOW*, III (1891), 293, 308.

identical. Writing in the *Church Reformer* directly following Wilde's incarceration, Image proclaims: "whatever in past days may have been his weaknesses, or follies, or sins, he has behaved in the hour of trial with manly courage."<sup>130</sup> As Burgess's unstated "faults" are "weaknesses" and are "foolish," Wilde's sexual crimes are equally "weaknesses, or follies," in the mind of Selwyn Image.

In this peculiar narrative within Ruskin's work, included specifically to show the depth of feeling of man for man, Selwyn Image portrays a relationship that could indeed be read as being homosexual. However, Image's statement that "*he* did foolish things" (my italics) suggests a level of detachment from the acts themselves, on the part of the writer. Nevertheless, the fact that all the biographical work to date on Selwyn Image brushes Burgess aside as being merely a fellow artist with whom he once shared a studio, presents an image of the relationship between the two men entirely at odds with the intensity of emotion displayed quite overtly, yet pointedly anonymously, in the *Hobby Horse*.<sup>131</sup> This fact could conceivably suggest a desire on the part of earlier editors of Image's archives to "play down" any controversial matter at a time when the laws which condemned Wilde were still in force, and the case itself still relatively recent. Image's letters held at the Bodleian appear to support such a theory. The majority of the letters, and virtually all of those written before the 1890s, have been collected and presented by Mackmurdo. The only direct reference to Burgess is in a letter to Mackmurdo dated May 31<sup>st</sup> 1880, when Image

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<sup>130</sup> Selwyn Image, "Mr. Oscar Wilde." *Church Reformer*, vol. XVI, June 1895, 127. Cited Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 508.

<sup>131</sup> See Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 58-9, Block, "The Pursuit of Beauty," 110. Equally, the fact that Image is quoted *anonymously* adds an air of suspicion as to their relationship and specifically how this account may be received. In doing so, Ruskin's nameless contributor recalls Basil's early determination to keep Dorian Gray's identity secret from Lord Henry, on account of what may be revealed in Basil himself, should his relationship with the boy come under scrutiny.



simply states, “Burgess is anxious to get a little model drawing.”<sup>132</sup> On February 4<sup>th</sup> 1881, Image may be referring to Burgess when he tells Mackmurdo, “I have been very busy experimenting at the studio – and helping to look after a sick friend,” but there are no further references to the man whatever.<sup>133</sup> Equally, no letters from Image survive that make any reference to Wilde’s trials, whereas publications such as *The Church Reformer* demonstrate that Image felt passionately about the subject, and wrote and published much in Wilde’s defence. It seems unlikely that Image would not have written to his longest and closest friend about two matters over which he felt so much passion, hence the paucity of manuscripts in the collections around the time of Image’s relationship with Burgess and the Wilde trials is strongly suggestive of expurgation.

Yet Image’s *anonymous* writings on Burgess survive and display a profoundly intense and unquestionably passionate relationship between the two men. Indeed, looking at Wilde’s own words of defence, they bear a striking similarity to Image’s writing of his feelings for Burgess. The profound intimacy between the two artists and the professed spiritual and moral purity of Burgess’s character is echoed in Wilde’s speech to the court after being asked, in his second trial, to explain the nature of the “Love that dare not speak its name”:

It is that deep, spiritual affection that is pure and it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art like those of Shakespeare and Michelangelo [...] It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> The Letters of S. Image to A. H. Mackmurdo. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Letters e.38, 15.

<sup>133</sup> The Letters of S. Image to A. H. Mackmurdo. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Letters e.38, 30.

<sup>134</sup> H. Montgomery Hyde, *Famous Trials: Seventh Series: Oscar Wilde* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962) 201.

This declaration could indeed describe Image's relationship with Burgess, be it a sexual relationship or not, and is soundly based in the Socratic philosophy which permeated Oxford during both Image and Wilde's years as undergraduates.

#### 1.4 "A Bundle of Letters": The Unwritten Word and the Implied Reader in Late Victorian Literature.

To keep this atmosphere vague and indeterminate and wonderful was the aim of the artist who wrote the story. I claim, Sir, that he has succeeded. Each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray. What Dorian Gray's sins are no one knows. He who finds them has brought them.<sup>135</sup>

The *Century Guild Hobby Horse* issue for October 1888 opens with a most interesting piece by Selwyn Image, playfully entitled "A Bundle of Letters: Giving a Selection From Three or Four of the Less Un-interesting of Them." (III, xii, 121.) After a teasingly lengthy introduction (the significance of which shall be explored later) Image tells the reader that

as far as I can judge, these letters are written by a middle-aged man to a young friend of his, a lad or a youth, whose character and parts interest him, and suggest some strong hopes that they will develop one of these days into fine issues. (III, xii, 122.)

The parallels with the Socratic relationship of mentor and pupil are immediately apparent. Here is a relationship "between an elder and a younger man," as Wilde phrased it, where the elder seeks to mould the individual personality of the youth. Couched, as much of the *Hobby Horse* is, in Pater's view of Hellenic philosophy, such a statement immediately suggests the possibility of a homosexual subtext. Indeed, the whole piece displays profound links with Pater's works, and the Oxonian philosophy of which Pater and his views were products. The recipient,

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<sup>135</sup> Letter from Wilde to "the editor of the *Scots Observer*" July 9<sup>th</sup> 1890. The letter was in response to the review of *Dorian Gray* stating that it was a tale fit only for "outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph boys." Though W. E. Henley was the editor in question, the review was written by Charles Whibley (1860-1930). See Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis, eds., *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* (London: Fourth Estate, 2000) 438 n.2.

“Leonardo,”<sup>136</sup> is himself a “university man,” as the letter writer makes plain in his attack on modern elocution in the letter headed “The Art of Reading Aloud”: “It is really astonishing how many of your friends [...] educated gentlemen from the universities [cannot read aloud] without stutterings and corrections.” (III, xii, 126.) Such distaste for modernity in all its unrefined, utilitarian banality is expanded upon in Image’s editorial introduction on the art of letter-writing:

The art of letter-writing, they assure us, like the art of prayer-writing, has died out. The penny-post, the railroads, telegrams, and what on receiving one in the first days of their invention a dear old Scotch servant of ours [...] indignantly called “them nasty open things,” the half-penny post-card, have ruined it. (III, xii, 121.)

Not only does this statement suggest the unity of the editor and the supposed letter-writer, but it also confirms the link between the “anti-utilitarian” philosophies of the Oxford of Image’s day, and that found in the “letters” in the *Hobby Horse*. The refined nature of these particular letters, which had the “virtue” of being “not scrawled, but written” are in sharp contrast to the crass, modern norm – thereby demonstrating the fact that they are a product of a distinct *personality*.

The letter-writer’s philosophy is saturated in Paterian rhetoric. Throughout the *Renaissance*, Pater re-emphasises the importance of “not the fruit of experience, but experience itself” in the pursuit of the Hellenic ideal. (*WPR*, 188.) In the essay on Winckelmann, we are told that “the aim of our culture should be to attain not only as intense but as complete a life as possible.” (*WPR*, 149-50.) Likewise, Image tells his fictional protégé that

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<sup>136</sup> The importance of this “nick-name” for the lad will be examined later.

Life, after all is a Fine Art, or rather it is the Ars Artium itself: and how few of us have [...] an initiation even into its secrets! In Art, you know, the great thing is to obtain breadth [...] is it not so with [...] every day existence? (III, xii, 129.)

Recalling the letter sent to Mackmurdo detailing the visit of the divine Lilith, Image's literary alter ego also receives a "charming little friend, whose prettiness robbed me of all the heart to send her away" (III, xii, 128). The upset thus caused to his day's routine sets the elder to musing over his duties, and again, his conclusions match those of Pater:

When a thing presents itself to you in that determined shape, all substantial difficulty vanishes; you may be too weak to do your duty, but it is at all events clear. The ordinary hours of life however are not determined enough to be dealt with by rigid, mechanical rules. How graceless and offensive are the slaves of such! (III, xii, 129.)

In *his* "Conclusion," Pater states that we are "to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy." (*WPR*, 189.) As the letters progress, the parallels between Image's writing and Pater's become yet more pronounced. As Pater's Winckelmann "in morals [...]" followed the clue of instinct," (*WPR*, 176.) Image's writer proclaims "I will pray for the instinct, which knows what to do with each successive experience, which can tell me when to abandon things, when to abandon myself to them, without worry, without regret, without repentance ...." (III, xii, 130). In what may be the apex of the *Hobby Horse*'s embodiment of the decadent creed, Image writes

The Art of Enjoying Life is to be found in our own masterful personality, which determines to see of what fineness this and this moment is capable; what secret lies held within it; what subtle sensation, intellectual or sensuous, it may be made to yield.... (III, xii, 130).

Such sentiments are drawn directly from Pater's work. His essay on Botticelli in its search for "the peculiar sensation [...] the peculiar quality of pleasure, which his

work has the property of exciting in us,” (*WPR*, 39) and the fleeting moment of inspiration in Joachim Du Bellay’s work when “a sudden light transforms some trivial thing [...] A moment – and then the thing has vanished,” (*WPR*, 140) find distinct echoes in Image’s work. Pater’s final exhortation to his readers “only be sure it is passion – that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness” is recounted both in the philosophy and to a degree the semantics, of the above passage.

However, upon reading the annual editions of the *Hobby Horse*, further connections between Image and Pater’s philosophies become apparent. The final letter, headed “On the Art of Not Doing Too Much,” includes an argument used by Image earlier that year in an article on Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* (1887) in the January edition of the magazine. Citing various works of Turner and Milton’s metrical Psalms as examples of poor work done by a great mind, the letter-writer extols the virtue of restraint on the part of the artist: “even the most valuable human beings should be on their guard against overburdening us with superfluous performances: by superfluous, I mean such as they are not driven to by the necessity of circumstances or their proper genius.” (III, xii, 133.) The earlier review of Pater’s work displays this same philosophy, proclaiming that “the world is not benefited by production, but only by the production of what is fine,” (III, ix, 15) as an opening defence for the infrequency of Pater’s publications, and again echoing the anti-utilitarian views of his Oxonian mentors. He continues:

the golden rule is this, that [the artist] should give us the work of his particular, differentiating inspiration, his artistic inspiration that is, only when he is able with accurate self-criticism to pronounce it the production of a fine mood, transmitted to us with the utmost care and skill of which he is capable [...] no artist can give us much work of that quality, which alone justifies him completely in giving us any. [...] Mr. Pater [...] in a singular degree [...] has recognized this, and been strong enough from the first to submit himself. (III, ix, 15.)

Image-the-critic, and the writer of the letters are one, and his philosophy on the production of art is born of Pater's working methods. Similarly, his views on moral behaviour and the "Art" of living in general are drawn from Pater's works.

However, it is not merely the *content* of this piece of writing that gives rise to suspicions of a hidden subtext of sexual subversion. The *form* also displays parallels with the clandestine publishing trade.

As mentioned earlier, Image's introduction to the piece is curiously lengthy and meandering. From the outset, he teases the reader by withholding information and drawing out the actual details of the letters themselves. The letters' author playfully asks, "who is the writer of these commended epistles, and what are they about?

Perhaps some sentimental youth, or a young lady" (III, xii, 121), after lambasting his "editorial slave-driver" for having given him such a tedious task as examining them. (III, xii, 122.) By referring to Horne (his former pupil and long-standing friend) as a "slave-driver," Image's tone in the piece is shown to be playfully disingenuous.

After asking the reader to speculate as to the content of the letters, and suggesting "sentimental" youths and young ladies, Image tells the reader

Well, anyhow I will have nothing to do with it to-night. To-morrow evening I will gird myself to the task. To-night I will seek refreshment, and a temporary forgetfulness of my burden, in a stroll abroad, a cigar, a glass of some crystal liquid, a chat with the fair bearer of it. (III, xii, 122.)

This tactic of suggesting salacious content, and then delaying the moment of revelation is a marked feature of much erotic literature of the time. In his short stories, Pierre Louÿs makes frequent use of this technique. The collection entitled *Sanguines* (1903) includes a series of such tales, and "A New Sensation" may be seen as operating in the same manner as Image's work in the *Hobby Horse*.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, the very format used, the letter, is itself indicative of possible erotic content. The necessarily partial view represented in a letter invites the reader to speculate further over any delicate suggestions made by the pseudo author. Also the aspect of privacy inherent in the letter format adds an immediate titillatory quality to the letter that is read by anyone other than its intended recipient. Hence the format of the letter was used heavily in the production of pornographic and erotic works in the Victorian era, such as Edward Sellon's *The New Epicurean* (1865). The secretive, partially revealed world of the letter was employed, to great effect, by Frederick Wedmore in his letters "To Nancy" and "The Deterioration of Nancy" in *The Savoy* (issues I and II respectively), where a moralising artist's letters to a young dancer hint at a world of fevered sexual repression and perversion.<sup>138</sup> An informed reader might therefore expect a more clandestine subtext to be found in Image's ambiguous work.

As with Louÿs's work, Image presents the text to the reader as having being expurgated. Names are excised, and Image tells us that of "some five and twenty" letters, only "three or four" of them will be printed. His specific phraseology here is important: Image selects the letters which he believes to be "most worth the *risk* of printing" (III, xii, 122; my italics), thereby suggesting the possibility of legal

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<sup>137</sup> Pierre Louÿs, "A New Sensation," trans. James Cleugh, *Sanguines* (London: Willy-Nilly, 1932).

<sup>138</sup> For details see Matthew Brinton Tildesley, "The Shadow of Oscar Wilde: A Study of Subversive and Clandestine Sexuality in Four Novellas from *The Savoy*," *Postgraduate English* 11 (2005), 17 Oct. 2007 < <http://www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/Tildesley.htm> >



implications to their publication. What is presented to us, therefore, is a skeletal tale, which infers a substantial amount of information not actually in the text. As explored above, the amount of Paterian influence is suggestive of a homosexual subtext, and indeed aspects of the letters may be used to “put flesh onto the bones” of such a supposition. When recounting a recital at an “At-Home,” the writer initially dwells upon the physical appearance of the “young gentleman, slim, thoughtfully attired, a trifle languid in the pose of him, with lank, jet locks,” (III, xii, 124) – the latter description of the stranger’s hair suggesting a little more than an impartial interest. Coupled with his interest in the young “Leonardo,” such details, given as they are within the framework of a heavily expurgated text, could be read as being sexually charged.

Indeed the subject of clandestine, sexually explicit literature is itself a facet of Image’s text. He refers to a “charming old Catullus” (III, xii, 123), demonstrating his taste for sexually explicit and homoerotic literature, and is quite taken by Simeon Solomon’s illustrations to *The Song Of Solomon*: “their singular qualities of mystical significance and rich, sensuous decorativeness held me fascinated” (III, xii, 128). Such sensuous and androgynous figures as can be found in this work were undoubtedly seen at the time as highly unfit for the scripture they illustrated – a quality that obviously had great appeal for Image and his “gospel of sensuousness.”

In order to explore this use of the clandestine publishing world in Image’s work, and the specific way in which form and content are interrelated in this matter, it is first necessary to examine the legal atmosphere surrounding sexuality in literature at this time.

*The Westminster Review* famously described Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894) as an "incoherent nightmare of sex."<sup>139</sup> Machen's story has only one reference to an act of sex, towards the end of the text, but the tale as a whole depicts a world simmering with repression, into which, as Wilde said of *Dorian Gray*, the reader brings his own sins: the character Clark is forever plagued by an itch to read his mysterious "scrap-book" which he keeps locked away; Villiers is constantly popping out for unspecified "appointments;" and the whole tale is haunted by the vaporous presence of Helen Vaughan – the elusive, but ever-present manifestation of uncontrollable and indefinable female sexuality. The effect of this technique of an implied text, certainly to the *Westminster* reviewer, is that what Machen is *not* saying appears to be said with the loudest voice.

By the 1890s, the concept of the "unprintable," given shape by the 1857 Obscene Publications Act, led to an atmosphere where "the unwritten" word becomes a substitute for "the unwritable," as the Act defined specifically that which could not be written. Lord Chief Justice Campbell's bill to curb sexually explicit printed matter was passed by Parliament, on his assurance that: "The measure was intended to apply exclusively to works written for the single purpose of corrupting the morals of youth and of a nature calculated to shock the common feelings of decency in any well-regulated mind."<sup>140</sup> Thus a particular form of innuendo began to gain momentum – when a writer pointedly says nothing, the implication is that what he or

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<sup>139</sup> Quoted by Iain S. Smith in his foreword to Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan*, 2nd ed. (London: Creation, 1996) 5.

<sup>140</sup> Cited Alec Craig, *The Banned Books of England*, Foreword E. M. Forster (London: Allen, 1937) 23.

she wants to say is “unsayable,” and that which cannot be spoken of, in publishing terms, is the sexual life.

In 1868, to quote E. M. Forster, “the unfortunate ruling” upon the original Act, by Chief Justice Cockburn, put a further definition on “the unwritable.”<sup>141</sup> Cockburn ruled that

the test of obscenity is this, whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall.<sup>142</sup>

Thus the intended *reader* becomes part of the defining matter when considering a work as obscene. However, this dangerously unstable definition proved to be something of a double-edged sword for prosecutors and publishers alike; as any work could now be prosecuted, providing that a reader was “depraved and corrupted” by it, so too any published work could be defended on the grounds of its intended readership. This led to an inevitable duality in the erotic book trade, as publishers such as Leonard Smithers and Charles Carrington managed to defy the law by publishing works in foreign languages, or in such finely bound volumes that they were available only to the wealthy, educated classes – deemed incorruptible in this over-simplistic view of society’s layers. Conversely, anyone selling cheap erotic matter, even post-card prints of nude paintings found in the nation’s art galleries, to

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<sup>141</sup> In his foreword, Craig, *Banned Books of England* 9.

<sup>142</sup> Cited Craig, *Banned Books of England* 24. The specific case which lead Cockburn to this redefinition will be referred to later, in the chapters dealing with subversive depictions of Catholicism.

the (corruptible) lower classes could be prosecuted for trading in obscene publications.<sup>143</sup>

As shown in Machen's work above, it also led to a culture of inference. A cunning writer could use the specifics of the law to spice his work with the suggestion of illicit details. R. L. Stevenson's masterful *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) employs this technique by recounting Jekyll's mysteriously secretive relationship with the "young man" Hyde in the form of doctors' and lawyers' letters – the only two professions who were licensed to print matter dealing with homosexuality. Leaving a sin unstated, as did Stevenson, Machen and Wilde, left the text open for whatever sins the reader might care to imagine.

Walter Pater famously excised the "Conclusion" from the second edition of *The Renaissance* in 1877. When the piece re-appeared, "with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning" in the third edition of 1888, Pater explains that "This brief 'Conclusion' was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men *into whose hands it might fall.*" (*WPR*, 186. My italics.) By using the precise phraseology of the 1868 amendment, Pater is sending an unmistakable message to his informed readers: for those with a knowledge of the law as it applied to sexually explicit literature, Pater

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<sup>143</sup> Lawrence James confirms that Cockburn's Act was aimed towards "the young and the working classes." He also states that for similar reasons, "the vigilance associations secured the prosecution of cheap translations of Boccaccio and Rabelais rather than more expensive ones." See Lawrence James, *The Middle Class: A History* (London: Little Brown, 2006) 321. Indeed, this view of the inherent "corruptibility" along lines of class remained a feature of British society for decades, as demonstrated in the *Lady Chatterley* trial in 1960. The trial sought to suppress, not simply the book *per se*, but a cheap, paperback edition published by Penguin, with the council for the prosecution famously asking the jury if they would want their "wives and servants" to read Lawrence's work. *The Lady Chatterley's Lover Trial (Regina V. Penguin Books Limited)*, Introd. H. Montgomery Hyde (London: Bodley Head, 1990) 17.

was inferring a direct application of his creed of Hellenic hedonism, with its emphasis on “not the fruit of experience, but the experience itself”, (*WPR*, 188) upon the sexual life.<sup>144</sup> By appearing to take account of the legal requirements concerning what many saw as a covert advocacy of homosexuality in the book, Pater in fact made his case for sexual libertinism much more overt.

As demonstrated, Selwyn Image’s “Bundle of Letters” contained in the *Hobby Horse* draws heavily upon Pater’s *Renaissance*, and in doing so he expands upon Pater’s use of the Obscenity laws to give definition to the unwritten words in his own work.<sup>145</sup> As explored above, the relationship between the letter writer and the young “Leonardo” fits precisely that model of the Oxonian pupil and mentor, based on the Socratic tradition, and therefore suggests homosexuality. However, if one explores the unwritten areas of the text, the suggestion of homosexuality becomes a certainty.

We are told virtually nothing about the boy, merely that the name “Leonardo” is a “playful nickname only.” (III, xii, 122.) As such, the name would have been chosen to reflect the character of the lad, or moreover, the writer’s impression of his character, with specific reference to another person or ideal. As the informed reader has already been alerted to the many parallels between Image’s work and Pater’s *Renaissance*, the latter’s “Leonardo” would seem an obvious starting point for outlining Image’s youth.

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<sup>144</sup> This aspect of Pater’s philosophy finds support in the fact that, whilst at Brasenose, Benjamin Jowett “felt instinctively that he [Pater] was inaugurating a mode of thought and feeling that would prove irresistible to a troublesome type of young man.” Kenneth Clark, cited in Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* xvii. Pater’s specific use of the phrase “young men” in his footnote defines yet further the precise nature of his subversive writing.

<sup>145</sup> As the third, newly unexpurgated edition of *The Renaissance* was published in January 1888, it is reasonable to surmise that it was this edition that Image had in mind when composing his “Letters” later that year.

Pater's Leonardo is a "love-child" and displays

the keen, puissant nature such children often have. We see him in his boyhood fascinating all men by his beauty, improvising music and songs, buying the caged birds and setting them free, as he walked the streets of Florence, fond of odd bright dresses and spirited horses. (*WPR*, 79.)

The only specific reference to Leonardo's self in Image's work tells the reader that "the gods have given you a delicate, musical ear, and a delightful voice. . . . ." (III, xii, 125). This may indeed be seen as comparable to Pater's portrait. However, Leonardo as a physical entity exists outside of the text. During the (inevitable) financial crisis due to poor sales in 1888, the leading lights of the *Hobby Horse* proposed changes to the magazine. Arthur Galton suggested a new cover, depicting "A beautiful human figure, and the countenance of Image's Leonardo, he is to be in an Italian garden with statues and Renaissance architecture and a book with a rising sun or moon."<sup>146</sup> Obviously, within the *Hobby Horse* circle, Image's Leonardo is every bit as famed for his beauty as Pater's. Also, the reference to the Renaissance and the idea of the boy encapsulating the birth of new knowledge contained in the imagery of "a book with a rising sun or moon" match Pater's subject exactly.

Examining Image's playful introduction to the letters, further connections between the two texts become apparent. As stated above, Image decries the lamentable state of contemporary letter-writing, and specifically damns bad handwriting. However, the letters described here

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<sup>146</sup> Cited Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 183.

had one virtue at any rate to start with, they were not scrawled, but written [...] my temper was certainly a little mollified by this writer's caligraphy [sic]; it put me in the mood to see virtues, not to damn vices (III, xii, 122).

This exquisite declaration is loaded with Paterian sentiments: Image is attracted by the *experience* of reading such beautiful words, rather than the *fruits* of reading them, whatever they may be. Also the fact that the beauty of the words “put me in the mood to see virtues, not to damn vices” implies that there are indeed vices to be seen. Yet these vices are redeemed by having been written in a beautiful hand. This concept of vice being sanctified by beauty resonates throughout Pater's *Renaissance* and specifically in “Leonardo”; recounting Da Vinci's amazement at the fantastic work of the *Duomo*, Pater states that

below, in the streets of Milan, moved a people as fantastic, changeful, and dreamlike. To Leonardo least of all men could there be anything poisonous in the exotic flowers of sentiment which grew there. It was a life of brilliant sins and exquisite amusements [...] it suited the quality of his genius, composed, in almost equal parts, of curiosity and the desire of beauty, to take things as they came. (*WPR*, 85-6.)

Both Image himself, and his fictionalised letter-writer, embody the “Hellenic” philosophical ideal of Pater's Leonardo – sins can be beautiful, and beauty is a virtue.

The two texts are inextricably bound together: Pater paints his portrait of Da Vinci and uses it, in conjunction with the “Conclusion” to illustrate and advocate the beauty of the Hellenic life; Image uses Pater's imagery and rhetoric to depict his own Leonardo, of whom he is doubly the author – first creating the character, and then, as a fictionalised self, educating him in the Socratic manner in order to mould him into Pater's idealised “Leonardo.” Though Image's text says almost nothing about the boy, to the informed reader, the portrait is exquisitely detailed.

Having established Leonardo's character, the suggestion of homosexuality becomes much more overt. Pater (whose work can be considered as a foundation for Image's Leonardo) tells us that Da Vinci's beloved was "a young man [...] Andrea Salaino" of whom Leonardo's portrait, "Love chooses for its own." (*WPR*, 91.) The notion of one, transcendent love is emphasised as we are told that "of all the interests in living men and women [...] this attachment alone is recorded." (*WPR*, 92.) Whilst recounting Wincklemann's "romantic, fervent friendships with young men" (*WPR*, 152) Pater virtually goes so far as to state that in order to embody the Hellenic ideal and to have a true appreciation of aesthetic beauty, one *must* be homosexual, further emphasising his own opinions of Da Vinci's sexuality:

those who are observant of beauty only in women, and are moved little or not at all by the beauty of men, seldom have an impartial, vital, inborn instinct for beauty in art. To such persons the beauty of Greek art will ever seem wanting, because its supreme beauty is rather male than female.<sup>147</sup>

Given Pater's own reasons for excising the "Conclusion" in the second edition of *The Renaissance*, and the age of Image's Leonardo, one may indeed conclude that the latter's letter writer is intent upon "corrupting the morals of youth," in the eyes of the 1857 Act. Indeed, Image's "letters" display a distinct consciousness of the legal implications regarding illicit sexuality in literature: when complaining of having spent "half-a-crown" on a hansom cab, the writer laments that the fair could have "made me the possessor of that charming old Catullus I was telling you about the other day, which now probably, forgive my conceit, will *fall into some much less appreciative hands*" (III, xii, 123; my italics). Any translations of Catullus into

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<sup>147</sup> A letter from Winckelmann to Friedrich von Berg, cited *WPR*, 153.



English, such as that by Sir R.F. Burton and Leonard Smithers (1894),<sup>148</sup> would have been precisely the kind of book that sought to avoid prosecution by being available only to the monied upper classes, and by way of its appeal to those with a Classical education; and Image's use of the 1868 Amendment's vocabulary makes plain this notion of the inherent legality of the intended readership. By extension, the "letters" themselves, purely on account of their very nature as *letters*, come under the same jurisdiction as the outlawed Roman homoerotic literature: they were not intended to be read by either Image or the readers of *The Hobby Horse* – they have literally fallen into the wrong hands. Image's alter ego clearly tells Leonardo "this letter is not likely to meet other eyes than your own, so that I need not be under an apprehension of sowing seeds" (III, xii, 132), implying that were the letters to be read by a third party, seeds would indeed be sown. This statement therefore acts in the same manner as Pater's footnote regarding the re-inclusion of the "Conclusion," where the stated negation actually implies an assertion.

Having crafted a tale from the very fabric of the Obscenity laws, therefore, Image's unwritten words ring out with illicit sexuality: the six periods following the description on Leonardo's "delicate, musical ear, and a delightful voice" denote further praise of the divine youth's physical attributes; the repetition of dots inferring expurgation between "My dear Leonardo" and the body of the letters on pages 123 and 126 become the lover's sweet words to his beloved; the dots preceding "Perhaps it is in a natural and healthy reaction from the frolic of our last night's entertainment"

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<sup>148</sup> For further details, see chapter 1 of James G. Nelson, *Publisher to the Decadents: Leonard Smithers in the Careers of Beardsley, Wilde, Dowson* (High Wycombe: Rivendale, 2000) 7-26.

(III, xii, 128) refer to a night of homosexual passion akin to Lionel Johnson's "In Praise of Youth" (cited above); and after Image's exhortation of the Paterian creed,

The Art of Enjoying Life is to be found in our own masterful personality, which determines to see of what fineness this and this moment is capable; what secret lies hid within it; what subtle sensation, intellectual or sensuous, it may be made to yield..... (III, xii, 130)

the periods signify an expansion and development of Pater's ethos of sensual enjoyment, applied directly to the sexual life (as Pater's earlier footnote implied) and therefore entirely unpublishable in 1888.

Thus, as the Obscenity laws of the late nineteenth century foisted upon the world of publishing an implied reader that was young, innocent and corruptible, those whose literary works sought to test or break the legal limits of sexuality in literature formed an alternative image of the implied reader – the well-read, clandestine literary cognoscenti.

"The Shadow of Oscar Wilde" explores the world of metonyms and symbolism that linked the publishable with the unpublishable for the informed reader of *The Savoy*. Four novellas are examined with specific reference to how the meaning of the text may be utterly transformed depending upon the level of clandestine knowledge in the reader. Image's work in the *Hobby Horse* may be seen as operating in exactly the same manner as those included in the later magazine, as may be demonstrated by analysing Lorraine Lively Hunt's reading of the work. Accepting Image's playful introduction at face value, Hunt believes the letters to be genuine. Image's fantasy is described as being "in extreme contrast" to Galton's letters from Matthew Arnold, in terms of their merit as letters. The author's teasingly suggestive title and

introduction are accepted unquestioningly by Hunt who proclaims that "Image was right in being unexcited by these letters. Even the five selected as being 'the less uninteresting of them' are only slightly interesting," the only noteworthy aspect to them being, in her opinion, a marked similarity to "the famous eighteenth-century letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son."<sup>149</sup> The whole piece is regarded as a tiresome account of an old man's attempt to educate an uninterested youth.

To this particular reader, the skilful coding of the text to include pointed suggestions of illicit sexuality goes wholly unnoticed. Image's work may be seen as operating on two levels, therefore: a superficial level in which a more conservative reader will see no cause for offence; and at the same time on a deeper, clandestine level, where those with knowledge of the law as it applied to literary obscenity, the underground erotic book trade, and the socially subversive creeds of high-aestheticism and decadence, would see an entirely different text.

In her lamenting the use of foreign languages in the *Hobby Horse* on account of it excluding some readers, Hunt identifies the key to this duality in the texts, when she states that "the reader is expected [...] to recognize glib references to esoteric knowledge in all areas of the liberal arts."<sup>150</sup> Hence the laws aimed at obliterating obscene publications actually gave birth to a specific literary form as writers and publishers forced outside of the law developed a covert method of communicating what was sexually subversive within a text that could be published openly. This literary form rested upon the presumption that its readers would have *a priori*

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<sup>149</sup> Hunt, "Century Guild Hobby Horse," 119.

<sup>150</sup> Hunt, "Century Guild Hobby Horse," 52.

“esoteric knowledge” in order to de-code the work – seeing it as part of a larger body of works whose aim was to voice subversive sexuality in publishable form.

By the time of *Dorian Gray*’s publication, this literary form was well established, as demonstrated above, and Wilde’s claim that “Each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray” illustrates how writers crafted their works specifically to take account of an implied readership diametrically opposed to that implied by the Obscene Publications Act. In Image’s review of Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits*, he makes the statement:

a careless, or ignorant, or unsympathetic reader may pass from end to end of his writings, and never recognize the knowledge, and the realization of knowledge, which underlie them, but which are never suffered to parade themselves [...] It is only by and by, when we come to criticize what we have been reading, that the sense of how much must have gone to produce these admirably full and accurate impressions, these slight but significant hints, these deeply searching judgements or suggestions, begins to dawn on us. (III, xii 17.)

Although this passage is ostensibly an observation regarding the works of Pater alone, it is clear that the modest and restrained Selwyn Image is also giving an insight into his own rhetorical style.

### 1.5 The Sketches of Dorian Gray: Oscar Wilde and *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*.

one had ancestors in literature, as well as in one's own race, nearer perhaps in type and temperament, many of them, and certainly with an influence of which one was more absolutely conscious. (*CWOW*, III [1890], 122.)

The origins of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are many and varied. The importance of external influences on the novel, such as Huysmans' *A Rebours* and Pater's *Renaissance*, along with the evolution of Wilde's own creative output, from the fairy tales to "The Portrait of Mr W. H.," have been topics of much debate over the years since Dorian Gray's first appearance. Clearly there is no single, definitive work that influenced Wilde in his conception and development of the novel, but rather the literary historian may appreciate a multitude of influences – more a patchwork, or a series of sketches – that informed Wilde's work, directly or indirectly. Amongst those sketches lie a number of works from *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*.

Reading through the pages of the *Hobby Horse* itself, one would be forgiven for supposing that Wilde's involvement with the magazine and its contributors was a fleeting one, as his essay "Keats' Sonnet on Blue" is indeed his only contribution to the magazine's pages. The issue for October 1886 (number 4) has a note at the bottom of the title page declaring, "Mr. Oscar Wilde's article upon Chatterton has been unavoidably postponed until the January number," but the article in fact never appeared.<sup>151</sup> However, the reason for its non-appearance seems not to have been

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<sup>151</sup> Similarly, Wilde was listed as a contributor-to-be for the New Series *Hobby Horse* in 1893 (see chapter 3.3 of the current work). Although this never transpired, perhaps due to the brevity of the New Series' existence, it does illustrate Wilde's continued connection with the writers and editors of the magazine.

lack of interest in the matter on Wilde's part, as seventy pages of the manuscript for the essay are extant in the Clark Memorial Library, UCLA. Indeed, the subject of Chatterton was a cause of much correspondence between Wilde and the Guild's members. As is made apparent by a series of letters from Wilde to Herbert Horne from August to December 1886, the editors of the magazine and Wilde himself had formed a committee dedicated to erecting a memorial to Chatterton at his old school in Bristol.<sup>152</sup> Wilde was particularly active in the group, advising Horne on the issue of restoration, public grants and suggesting a bas-relief with the inscription:

To the Memory  
of  
Thomas Chatterton  
One of England's greatest poets and sometime pupil of this school.<sup>153</sup>

On 24<sup>th</sup> November 1886 Wilde delivered a lecture on Chatterton at Birkbeck College, London and in a subsequent letter to Horne declared: "I was very nearly coming to fetch you the night of the fog to come and hear my lecture [...] but did not like to take you out on such a dreadful night." The letter concludes with the languid and somewhat intriguing invitation to "come in for a cigarette some night soon."<sup>154</sup> Clearly the young *Hobby Horse* editor and Wilde were on intimate terms, both within the spheres of their professional lives and socially.

Likewise, the lectures of other *Hobby Horse* contributors were of great interest to Wilde. Selwyn Image gave a series of four lectures on Modern Art at Willis's

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<sup>152</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 284-5 and 89-90.

<sup>153</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 289. It is unclear whether or not this venture came to any fruition, though Holland and Hart-Davis note that "the school has since been demolished" (284).

<sup>154</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 289-90.

Rooms between December 1887 and February 1888. Wilde attended at least one of this series, as is attested to by his review of the second lecture in the *Sunday Times* on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1888. The article was to appear in the *Pall Mall Gazette* the month before but was “crowded out of the *PMG* by Christmas advertisements!” The letter to Horne detailing the change of publication displays Wilde’s appreciation of Image’s work as he states that his review “may, even there, serve to draw attention to the admirable series.”<sup>155</sup> The authors made gifts of their work to one another. Horne’s *Diversi Colores* (1891) received high praise from Wilde, when the young poet sent him a presentation copy: “you are a perfect player of a little lovely reed;”<sup>156</sup> and Wilde sent a copy of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898) to Image. Indeed, Image was one of only five recipients specified by Wilde to Ross on this occasion.<sup>157</sup> In a letter to the publisher Alfred Trübner Nutt, Wilde requests that a copy of *The Happy Prince* (1888) be sent to the *Hobby Horse* for review.<sup>158</sup> Whether the book was ever sent or not remains a mystery, though no review appeared in the magazine itself. Lady Wilde’s *Ancient Legends of Ireland* (1887) was however given a glowing review by the increasingly Celt-obsessed Arthur Galton (II, vi, 67-75). Although the strident Irish Nationalism in the book (and indeed the review itself) may be seen as in keeping with the anti-establishment bias of the *Hobby Horse*, it would be logical to assume that without Wilde’s status and connection to the magazine, such an article may not have appeared. Galton’s words may be seen as being projected flattery for Wilde himself, or even a favour to Wilde, from his many friends and colleagues within the magazine, as a critical “gift” to his mother.

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<sup>155</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 338.

<sup>156</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 484.

<sup>157</sup> Letter to Robert Ross, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1898. Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 1023.

<sup>158</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 350.

Clearly Oscar Wilde was on familiar, if not indeed intimate, terms with both the editors and contributors of the *Hobby Horse*, and their literary works. However, a letter to A. J. Hipkins (1826-1903, pianist, early advocate of “ethnomusicology” and authority on musical instruments) displays a connection between Wilde’s work and the *Hobby Horse* that is of particular relevance here. Hipkins wrote an article for the magazine entitled “On Some Obsolete Musical Instruments” which was duly published in the *Hobby Horse* in October 1888 (III, xii, 136-43). Wilde’s letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month reads:

Dear sir, I have read with very great interest your fascinating article in the *Hobby Horse* of this month and should be very much obliged if you would write a somewhat similar article for my magazine that could be illustrated.<sup>159</sup>

Not only does this letter re-enforce the point that Wilde read the *Hobby Horse*, but it also demonstrates the fact that he used the magazine as a source for ideas in his own publications. Furthermore, both the Oxford Complete Works of Wilde (2000, ongoing) and the Norton Critical Edition of *Dorian Gray* (2007) illustrate that Wilde “transcribed a number of paragraphs” from articles in the *Woman’s World* into *Dorian Gray*, while he was “scavenging material to include in Dorian Gray’s decadent pleasure house.”<sup>160</sup> Hence the periodicals to which Wilde contributed, read and edited, become part of the web of possible sources for *Dorian Gray*.

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<sup>159</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 361. (No such article ever appeared in the *Woman’s World*.)

<sup>160</sup> Michael Patrick Gillespie, ed., *Oscar Wilde: The Picture of Dorian Gray: Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Reviews and Reactions, Criticism*. 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2007) 427. This refers to passages from Wilde’s own review of Ernest Lefebure’s *Embroidery and Lace: Their Manufacture and History from the Remotest Antiquity to the Present Day* (1888). See also *CWOW*, III, 364.



As already illustrated, Dorian Gray's transition from aestheticism to decadence may be seen as a distillation of events within the artistic community in the 1880s – events that were initially reflected, and then to a degree *shaped* by the writings of Selwyn Image and others in the *Hobby Horse*. Although Image's voice was most certainly not the *only* one raised in opposition to the "uncomely puritanism" of its day, Wilde's involvement with the magazine and its editors would suggest it was one of which he was well aware.

Wilde and the creators of the *Hobby Horse* were products of the same environment to a considerable degree, as they graduated from Oxford and honed their creative skills within a community of artists who found themselves at odds with much of the mainstream society which surrounded them. The Oxonian, Hellenic idea of the personality, and Pater's High Aestheticism, which greatly influenced the decadent view of Art, were both fundamentally opposed to Protestant and bourgeois moral values, and specifically their puritanical approach to the portrayal of sexuality in art. It is, therefore, unsurprising to find a significant amount of "common ground" in the writings of Selwyn Image and Oscar Wilde. The template of the Socratic mentor and pupil, the aura of adoration between artists and subjects, tinged with homoeroticism, the duality of both literature and life itself, as the artist sought to express himself creatively and sexually in a society that became increasingly intolerant of "deviance," are all hallmarks of the works of both men. However, if one examines the texts of Image's work alongside that of Wilde, it is indeed possible to surmise that, as with the intended case of Hipkins' writing, Oscar Wilde used articles in the *Hobby Horse* as direct inspiration for his own work.

The first of Wilde's creations that bares a distinct resemblance to Image's earlier work is the character of Basil Hallward. This may be seen upon re-examining Image's writings on Arthur Burgess within Ruskin's article in the *Hobby Horse* in July 1886. Wilde's fiction draws heavily upon the factual world of fashionable artistic London in the 1880s, the world into which Image's narrative offers a fleeting glimpse. The studio of the Charles' Ricketts and Shannon has variously been cited as the location for the genesis of *Dorian Gray*, with both artists being claimed, at one time or another, as the inspiration for the character of Basil.<sup>161</sup> Similarly, Basil Ward is proposed as another possible artist around whom and whose works Wilde's tale is spun.<sup>162</sup> For his own part, Wilde, we are told, "amused himself by giving conflicting answers" to the question of Basil's template and the origin of the story.<sup>163</sup> However, what becomes clear upon reading all of these accounts is that Basil, like the story itself, is a composite, based upon a multitude of fashionable artists in *fin-de-siècle* London, within whose circles Wilde moved and worked. Amongst those circles were Horne, Mackmurdo, Image and for a while, until his seemingly untimely death, Arthur Burgess.<sup>164</sup>

Taking into account the fact that Wilde read the *Hobby Horse*, took ideas from it, and particularly admired Selwyn Image's work, the article on Burgess becomes of great interest in the delineation of Wilde's creative process, as it is an account of a *fin-de-siècle* London artist's ardent love for another man. In essence, this is the very

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<sup>161</sup> See Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin, 1988) 295, Horst Schroeder, *Additions and Corrections to Richard Ellmann's Oscar Wilde*, 2nd ed. (Braunschweig: Privately printed, 2002) 106, Jullian, *Oscar Wilde* 183.

<sup>162</sup> Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 295.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Although the year of Burgess' death is given as 1886, demonstrated by the eulogies in the *Hobby Horse*, as yet no date can be found for his birth. However, the tone of Ruskin and Image's writing appear to suggest Burgess died relatively young, of an unspecified illness.

basis of the character of Basil Hallward. Examining the texts of both works, the modes of expression as the artist speaks of his beloved – the man whose “portrait” he depicts for the reader – are remarkably similar.

The initial connection between the texts is made manifest by an absence. The notion of “secrecy” when displaying profound emotions between two male “friends” is a marked feature of both works. Image’s identity is kept secret from the readers of the magazine, with Ruskin merely introducing his words as representing “the deeper feeling of one who cared for him to the end” (I, ii, 49). Basil behaves similarly, telling Lord Henry, “when I like people immensely, I never tell their names to anyone” and conceding, “you know how I love secrecy [...] I suppose you think me awfully foolish about it?” (*CWOW*, III [1890], 5-6.)<sup>165</sup>

From this common ground of secrecy (with its un-stated concomitant “guilt”), both narratives move forward and display various similarities in their content and modes of expression. The details of Image’s first meetings with Burgess, “Immediately and immensely I was attracted to him [...] on that day had begun one of the most valuable, and the closest, and the dearest friendships, that I shall ever know” (II, vi, 49) is matched in intensity with Wilde’s lover who confesses, “When our eyes met [...] I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that [...] it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself.” (*CWOW*, III [1890], 8.) The “intellectualising” of the love felt for the beloved is also a feature of both narratives. Image tells us that on their first meeting, “we

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<sup>165</sup> The use of the word “foolish” in this situation may be compared to Image’s reference to Burgess and Wilde’s “sins” as being “foolish,” as discussed previously.



went out for a walk, talking of Art, of Religion, of all manner of things” (I, vi, 49), and Wilde’s artist equally states “he is charming to me, and we walk home from the club arm in arm, or sit in the studio and talk of a thousand things” (*CWOW, III* [1890], 14).

When both Image and Basil are allowed to speak unrestrainedly of their feelings for the adored one, Image’s work reads almost as Basil’s confession to Dorian, but in retrospect. The infamous passage, excised from the 1891 edition, but seized upon by Queensbury’s defence,<sup>166</sup> “it is true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man usually gives to a friend [...] I quite admit that I adored you madly, extravagantly, absurdly,” (*CWOW, III* [1890], 90) echoes Image’s confession over Burgess, as he states:

when I am speaking of him, now that he is gone, I feel that I am speaking from as sure a knowledge as ever one man can have of another [...] I loved him too dearly, and honoured him too highly, to care about denying his faults, or about speaking of his splendid qualities with unbalanced emotion. (I, vi, 49-50.)

As with Wilde’s text, Image’s eulogy is heavily loaded with notions of morality (as discussed previously) and as with Basil’s repeated statements over the strength of Dorian’s personality, Image’s text focuses entirely upon Burgess-the-man, with absolutely no mention of his work as an artist.

Although by no means a comprehensive and definitive “genesis” for the character of Basil, Selwyn Image’s “Arthur Burgess” displays a number of similarities to Wilde’s later character, and can be considered part of a tapestry of influential sources,

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<sup>166</sup> See Holland, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess* 87.

crystallising, as it does, the notions of the (tacit or otherwise) homoeroticism between artists and their subjects in an artistic community, as represented in a magazine read by Wilde.

When one re-examines Image's "Bundle of Letters" from the October 1888 issue of the *Hobby Horse*, however, the case for the magazine's place as a direct and significant source of inspiration for *Dorian Gray* gains considerable momentum. One may be confident that Wilde read this issue with particular interest, as it contains Hipkins' article on "Obsolete Musical Instruments" – the article which he sought to reproduce in his own magazine. Indeed, only Lionel Johnson's brief poem "On Falmouth Harbour" separates the two pieces, with Image's "Letters" taking pride of place as the opening article.

Image informs the reader of the general premise of the letters in his introduction, claiming to have "discovered" the fact that they were "written by a middle-aged man to a young friend of his, a lad or a youth, whose character and parts interest him, and suggest some strong hopes that they will develope [sic] one of these days into fine issues." (III, xii, 122.) Such a relationship may be said to be the fundamental basis for the characters of Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray, although Wilde's epigram-spinning alter ego is gifted with a more youthful incarnation at the outset.<sup>167</sup>

Both Henry and the letter-writer seek to educate a young man in the many arts of

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<sup>167</sup> Indeed, the inspiration behind Lord Henry Wotton's very name is suggested within the pages of the *Hobby Horse*, as Herbert Horne makes reference to a personal hero of his, Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639), diplomat and writer, in his "Letters and Papers of Adam Legendre" (part two, VI, xxii, 45; the importance of these articles will be discussed later). Horne also designed the title-page to a translation of Wotton's *The Elements of Architecture* (mentioned in the "Legendre" papers), commissioned by Longmans and Green, 1903. For further details of this book see Ian Fletcher, *Rediscovering Herbert Horne: Poet, Architect, Typographer, Art Historian*. 1880-1920 British Authors Series (Greensboro, NC: ELT, 1990) 97.

life. In both works, the recipient of the elder's wisdom is introduced as a young, beautiful, empty shell. Dorian is literally a "brainless, beautiful thing" to Henry (*CWOW*, III [1890], 5), and at the start of the narrative, his behaviour is indeed that of an untutored child:

"Oh, I am tired of sitting, and I don't want a life-sized portrait of myself," answered the lad, swinging round on the music-stool, in a wilful, petulant manner. When he caught sight of Lord Henry, a faint blush coloured his cheeks for a moment and he started up. (*CWOW*, III [1890], 18.)

Image's Leonardo is similarly untutored, requiring letters on the "Arts" of "Listening," "Reading Aloud," "Enjoying Life" and "Not Doing Too Much."<sup>168</sup> Both attended or are attending Oxford, and both boys are beautiful. As discussed in the previous chapter, the nick-name of "Leonardo" implies beauty, and the character of Leonardo himself was well known as a divine youth amongst the editors and contributors of the magazine, as is evident by Galton's concept for a new cover, depicting "the countenance of Image's Leonardo" during 1888. Likewise, both boys embody the Hellenic ideal: Galton's image of Leonardo, "in an Italian garden with statues and Renaissance architecture and a book with a rising sun or moon,"<sup>169</sup> depicts the boy as an archetype for the Paterian Renaissance ideal, firmly rooted as it is in Hellenic values; Dorian, we are told by Basil, similarly embodies "all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek." (*CWOW*, III [1890], 13.)

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<sup>168</sup> Image-the-editor heads the excerpts from the letters with titles such as the "*Art of Enjoying Life*." The final letter, "*Of the Art of Not Doing Too Much*" is distinctly reminiscent of Wilde's later essay "The True Function and Value of Criticism: with Some Remarks on the Importance of Doing Nothing: A Dialogue" published in the *Nineteenth Century* in July and September 1890. Katherine Bradley recalled that the original title, whilst Wilde was writing the article, was "*the Art of Doing Nothing*," (see Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 289), again suggesting Wilde may have been influenced by Image's earlier work.

<sup>169</sup> Cited Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 183.

The “social settings” of the two tales are also alike. The first two letters are drawn from one single experience of the letter-writer, namely an “At-Home” amidst the leisured classes. After lambasting the “At-Home” as shabby, modern replacement for the more genteel practice of people asking “friends to dine with them,” the writer paints the scene thus:

The grave hireling stridently proclaims your name: at the entrance stands your hostess, who warmly shakes you by the hand, assures you of your kindness in appearing, and keeps one eye the meanwhile fixed upon the next comer, who is following up behind you ready to be announced. And so you pass into the throng, gaze anxiously round for some familiar face, discover one, if you are in luck’s way, thread carefully your passage up to it in and out between men’s shoulders and over ladies’ skirts, and add your voice to the general uproar. (III, xii, 124.)

This recalled event is identical to the “crush at Lady Brandon’s” described by Basil as his first meeting with Dorian (*CWOW*, III [1890], 8), from the society gathering itself, to the taleteller’s distaste for having to attend such functions. Thus Image’s “Letters,” predating Wilde’s novel by almost two years, begins with an older man seeking to educate an idealised Hellenic, beautiful, but empty-headed youth in the arts of life, amidst the leisured, upper classes of fashionable *fin-de-siècle* London.

Although the first and last letters deal with the somewhat innocuous subjects of reading aloud, listening and the production of quality over quantity, the central two letters (headed “*Take us the foxes, the little foxes*” and “*Of the Art of Enjoying Life*”) embody a far more controversial philosophy. As explored earlier, the broad themes of Image’s alter ego as he seeks to educate Leonardo are heavily based upon the theories of Walter Pater as espoused in his *Renaissance*. This same philosophy is voiced by Wilde’s characters. As one reads through these two “letters,” a considerable amount of the text appears to be echoed in Wilde’s later work.

Leonardo is told that “Life after all is a Fine Art, or rather it is the Ars Artium itself” (III, xii, 129). The older Dorian, after musing over “that curiosity about life that, many years before, Lord Henry had first stirred in him,” reflects that “life itself was the first, the greatest, of all arts” (*CWOW, III* [1890], 107). Similarly, Lord Henry’s earlier teachings find precedent in Image’s letters. He tells Leonardo

How much of the secret of happiness, even of enjoyment, lies in a power of determined receptivity. I will take what the gods send me; but I will make of it what I choose. And it is astonishing how plastic experiences are. After all they are mere clay, to be left amorphous, or to be modelled into divine shapes, or into fiendish ones (III, xii, 130).

This idea of the personality making what it will from experiences is expressed by

Lord Henry thus:

To realise one’s nature perfectly, – that is what each of us is here for [...] to live his life out fully and completely, [...] to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream. (*CWOW, III* [1890], 20-21.)

Image’s sage continues:

The Art of Enjoying Life is to be found in our own masterful personality, which determines to see of what fineness this and this moment is capable; what secret lies hidden within it; what subtle sensation, intellectual or sensuous, it may be made to yield [...] I will pray for the instinct which knows what to do with each successive experience, which can tell me when to abandon things, when to abandon myself to them, without worry, without regret, without repentance (III, xii, 130 and 129).

Lord Henry exclaims: “Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing.”

(*CWOW, III* [1890], 25.)



The philosophies of the two “mentors” are identical, and their language used in expressing that philosophy remarkably similar. It may well be argued that both Lord Henry and Image’s letter-writer share a common ancestor in Pater’s *Renaissance*; indeed it would be churlish to refute such a claim. However, the shared Paterian philosophy in both works must not be viewed in isolation when considering the influence of Image’s work upon Wilde’s later novel. Although Pater’s work was to inform the greater part of the *fin-de-siècle* decadence movement, what Selwyn Image has done with that philosophy in his “Bundle of Letters” is unique in 1888. It was Image who took the ethos of “experience for experience’s sake,” along with many other details from the *Renaissance*, and voiced those ideas in the form of a (theoretical) dialogue between an older mentor and a beautiful young boy. This boy represents the Hellenic ideal, and the story takes place amongst the upper echelons of fashionable London society. Moreover, as explored in the previous chapter, the whole text of “A Bundle of Letters” is suffused with a latent homoeroticism necessitating a duality within the text itself. This masterfully crafted work stands as a direct challenge to the “uncomely puritanism” of the age, be it the values of the middle-class philistines or the ever-increasingly censorious judiciary.

The parallels between “A Bundle of Letters” and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are thus manifold, from the characters and relationship of Dorian and Lord Henry, along with the social setting of the story, to the clandestine, subversive sexuality woven into the tale, leading to a duality in the text. As stated earlier, the *Hobby Horse* also illuminates the world in which *Dorian Gray* is set: the world of artistic, *fin-de-siècle* London as it came to define itself against puritanical bourgeois morality; a world that worshipped the glory of the Hellenic ideal, and embraced the notion of love between

men in all its forms, from the devotion of a pupil for his master, or an artist for his subject, to an ardent, passionate homosexuality.

There is also one further element of Wilde's novel that may be found in embryonic form within the pages of the magazine, and that is the central character's name.

The "Greekness" of Dorian's name has been remarked upon by many critics. In their work *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, Philip E. Smith and Michael S. Helfand have referred to the name as being "an analogue to the innocent perfection of Ancient Greece,"<sup>170</sup> a notion which Wilde himself states in the text. Richard Dellamora in his essay on "Dorianism" illustrates his theory that *Dorian Gray* is a "parodic critique of Pater's aestheticism" with the observation that Dorian himself acts as the catalyst for Basil Hallward's personal renaissance.<sup>171</sup> He also notes how the Doric race embraced homosexuality within its warrior code, a fact stated in C. O. Müller's *The History and Antiquities of the Doric Race* (1830),<sup>172</sup> and later in John Addington Symonds' homosexual polemic *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1883). However, an article by J. Henry Shorthouse (1834-1903, novelist and Quaker-turned-Anglican with a "mysticism [...] something in common with Newman's")<sup>173</sup> published in the January

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<sup>170</sup> Philip E. Smith and Michael S. Helfand, eds., *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks: A Portrait of Mind in the Making* (New York: OUP, 1989) 98.

<sup>171</sup> Richard Dellamora, *Apocalyptic Overtures: Sexual Politics and the Sense of an Ending* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994) 58-9.

<sup>172</sup> Müller's work offers an admirably disinterested account of homosexuality within the spheres of education and warfare. He specifies at the outset that "We will first state the exact circumstances of this relation, and then make some general remarks on it; but without examining it in a moral point of view, which does not fall within the scope of this work." C. O. Müller, *The History and Antiquities of the Doric Race*, trans. Henry Tufnell and George Cornewall Lewis, 2nd ed., vol. 2, 2 vols. (London: Murray, 1839) 300. At the time of publication in Britain, sodomy was still an offence punishable by the death penalty. See White, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality* 25.

<sup>173</sup> Barbara Dennis, "Shorthouse, Joseph Henry (1834-1903)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 27<sup>th</sup> September. 2005 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36077>>.

issue of the *Hobby Horse*, 1888, explores the philosophy of the Dorians as it relates to modern life and art. Itself the opening article in the January issue, “Of Restraining Self Denial in Art” begins with the statement:

The Dorian flutes, heard through the mysterious defiles of Olympos [sic], haunted by the legends of the Vision of God, taught their hearers, in those ancient, genuine strains of Hellas, this truth above all others that there is no Art but the Art of Life. (III, ix, 3.)

For Shorthouse, the Dorians were “in themselves the most perfect realization of the Art-life” and he states that “‘Give us that which is good and beautiful’ was the Dorian’s prayer” (III, ix, 3 and 5). Furthermore, “this unique people” claims Shorthouse, “[were] themselves the ground-spring of Culture” (III, ix, 3). The parallels with Wilde’s cultured hero, of whom Lord Henry says “Life has been your art,” (*CWOW*, III [1890], 159) become yet more detailed as Shorthouse’s argument develops. “Death itself seems to have disappeared from their view,” he proclaims on page 5, and the statement is followed with an anonymous quotation claiming that “they looked not to the future but to present existence.”

Hence the idea of a life lived in the unfading present, with aging and death postponed seemingly forever, is coupled with life lived as Art through a pursuit of high Culture and encapsulated within the one word “Dorian.” Of course, one of the principal art forms of the Dorian race was music, with Shorthouse announcing “the first music of Culture – the Dorian Harmony” (III, ix, 3). Indeed, several paragraphs are devoted to the practices of the Dorian musicians. This aspect of the word “Dorian” is also illustrated in Wilde’s novel. After Lord Henry’s initial assault upon the psyche of Dorian Gray, leading him to cry out “Stop! [...] stop! You bewilder me,” Dorian reflects that “Music had stirred him like that. Music had troubled him many times.”

(*CWOW, III* [1890], 22.) Lord Henry's words are again likened to music in their effect upon Dorian, as the elder man himself muses "that it was through certain words of his, musical words said with musical utterance, that Dorian Gray's soul had turned to this white girl [Sybil Vane] and bowed in worship before her" (*CWOW, III* [1890], 47). Finally, after declaring Dorian's life as being lived as Art (quoted above), Henry proclaims "You have set yourself to music." (*CWOW, III* [1890], 159.) Clearly Wilde is using the name "Dorian" as a metonym for the ancient Greek race, their culture and practices.

Wilde's education at Oxford included studying Greek culture and it would be distinctly possible to surmise that all of these aspects of the word "Dorian" were known to him from his undergraduate years. Richard Dellamora states that in the Oxford of Ruskin, Arnold and Jowett, "Müller's *History and Antiquities of the Doric Race* became a standard undergraduate text."<sup>174</sup> The Oxford Complete Works edition of *Dorian Gray* details the use of Müller's *Dorians* in Pater's lectures which "date back to the time of W[ilde]'s undergraduate years at Oxford (1874-8)." (*CWOW, III*, 371.) Though noting that the Dorians' "existed in a state of aesthetic perfection" and that "they learned their jurisprudence and history in the schools of music,"<sup>175</sup> Pater makes no reference to the life lived as an unending present and the continual deferment of aging and death that is such a marked feature of Shorthouse's work, and the very core of Dorian Gray's unique being.

The evidence for Wilde using articles from the *Hobby Horse* as direct inspiration for his own work is compelling, and the concentration of so many of Wilde's ideas for

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<sup>174</sup> Dellamora, *Apocalyptic Overtures* 46.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

*Dorian Gray* in Shorthouse's work demands that the work be taken seriously as a direct influence. "Of Restraining Self Denial in Art" conveniently encapsulates many of the themes and conceits of *Dorian Gray* and links them all with the name Dorian in a timely and conveniently concise, five-page article (Müller's weighty tome is a two volume work totaling almost one thousand pages). As it has been proven that Wilde read the *Hobby Horse* with a view to using the articles contained therein for his own work, Shorthouse's "Dorians" joins with the writings of Selwyn Image to become part of a series of preliminary sketches influencing Wilde as he was developing the story of *Dorian Gray*.

As Peter Ackroyd has noted, "as soon as he received the commission, Wilde wrote swiftly – the sad history of *Dorian Gray* was no doubt one he carried in his head,"<sup>176</sup> and Joseph Bristow states that "*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is embedded in an extensive archive of materials that Wilde had been intellectually processing since the early 1880s." (*CWOW*, III, 365.) The articles in the *Hobby Horse* were conveniently in the right place at the right time to be of significant "assistance" to Wilde as he formulated his tale. The magazine's pages chart the gradual progression of *fin-de-siècle* British artists from aestheticism to decadence; they illustrate how subversive sexuality and sensuality become ever more potent weapons in the struggle against "uncomely puritanism." Its articles depict a world of bohemian artists, amongst whom love (of many kinds) between men may be found, and they reflect and refute the laws seeking to outlaw such love in their clandestine subtexts. From within the magazine there appears the image of a beautiful young boy amidst London's fashionable high society, himself the very perfection of the Hellenic ideal, and a

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<sup>176</sup> Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, ed. Ackroyd 7.

Paterian mentor with the suggestion of clandestine sexual appetites. There also arises the notion of Life lived as Art, cultured Epicureanism, a life in the continuous present with no thought of the decay-heralding future, and the name "Dorian."

Phillipe Jullian has stated that "much was borrowed in this story" and that "*The Picture of Dorian Gray* has been said to be a succession of parodies, almost a compilation."<sup>177</sup> Peter Ackroyd puts the matter a little more bluntly: "Wilde was not one to shrink from open plagiarism [...] when the occasion warranted."<sup>178</sup> However, when one examines these sketches of Dorian Gray's story in the *Hobby Horse* and adds them to the already considerable list of "literary ancestors" to the work, what becomes apparent is Wilde's phenomenal skill in weaving together so many disparate strands to form the text and the tale of his one, groundbreaking novel. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* enjoy a unique reflexivity. Wilde's novel, and its reception, represents a "fixed point" in a transition in British society, a transition which the quarterly magazine charts more fluidly over its ten year publication. The issues raised by Wilde's book, both within the text itself and the wider implications for Wilde, his peers and society at large, make useful starting points for exploring the developments of literary, artistic and social themes that run throughout the thirty two issues of the magazine; *Dorian Gray* is the "prism" through which one may view the intricate patterns of the magazine's messages. But equally the *Hobby Horse* itself illustrates and explores many of the themes and suggests a significant number of the

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<sup>177</sup> Jullian, *Oscar Wilde* 184-5.

<sup>178</sup> Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, ed. Ackroyd 12.

details that eventually coalesced in the mind of Wilde to form his most infamous work.

### 1.6 Selwyn Image and Oscar Wilde Revisited.

This reciprocal action between the two bodies of literature also has implications for the author of so many of the works here examined, Selwyn Image. As Wilde's literary works were used as "evidence" of sexual deviancy at his trial, what is to be deduced about the man whose literary works are so similar to those of Wilde as to be considered direct influences? There can be little doubt that several of Image's works here examined display homoerotic, if not homosexual, qualities. In the light of the works here examined, what conclusions may be drawn regarding the Reverend-turned-artist, social rebel-turned-Professor, who was once to be seen "ladling out punch at some Art Workers' Guild festivity, sporting a lady's flaxen wig"?<sup>179</sup>

Image's adoration of Donatello's *Boy David*, and his fixation with the features of "the loveliest of boys" in Rome or the "ravishing" youthfulness of the "kids at the Grafton" could equally be read as the detached appreciation of beauty in one who has received a Classical education in the arts and is unfettered by gender-biased concepts of beauty. As the Greek view of beauty hailed the young male form as perfection, it is reasonable to suggest that such values would be instilled in students of Greek culture. Image's passionate eulogy for his lost friend, Arthur Burgess, by its very nature is open to varied readings. As Jeffrey Richards has noted, "changes in language and modes of expression render statements of affection from previous ages highly complex and ambiguous matters."<sup>180</sup> Richards also draws parallels between

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<sup>179</sup> Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 1.

<sup>180</sup> Jeffrey Richards, "'Passing the Love of Women': Manly Love and Victorian Society," *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940*, eds. J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1987) 92.



Victorian England and ancient Greece, in that both were male dominated societies.

“For the upper middle classes” he claims “life revolved around all-male institutions: the public school, the university, the armed forces, the church, parliament, the club, the City.”<sup>181</sup> This section of Victorian society was precisely where Selwyn Image belonged, and as John Tosh notes,

intimate friendships between young men [...] were a further consequence of carefully policed contacts between males and females [of the same class] and the attraction of young men to each other was enhanced by the generally superior quality of their education compared with that of girls. In any society where women are regarded as markedly inferior or different, close friendships between males is likely to flourish. Christian tradition extolled the virtues of spiritual love between men, and familiarity with the Greek classics reinforced the message that what men could give each other was better than anything a woman could offer.<sup>182</sup>

Image’s love for Burgess could indeed be “that deep, spiritual affection that is pure and it is perfect” which Wilde so eloquently, yet disingenuously, extolled at his trials. Burgess could well have been to Image what Arthur Hallam was to Tennyson, or Wolcott Balestier to Kipling. On the other hand, as Richards states, “the extravagant language employed between friends may have been born of literary convention, or it may have been the closest that men of conventional moral conscience could get to expressing carnal affection;”<sup>183</sup> and it is worth noting that the only surviving writings of Image regarding his love for Burgess are cited anonymously.

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<sup>181</sup> Richards, “Manly Love,” 100.

<sup>182</sup> John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 109-10.

<sup>183</sup> Richards, “Manly Love,” 110.

Furthermore, Image's defence of Wilde in the pages of *The Church Reformer* go far beyond Wilde's case alone, to become a vindication of homosexuality itself. In the article "Morality, The Press, and The Law," Image declares

The law of the land regards the particular form of sensuality of which Mr. Wilde stands accused as a criminal [sic]. I need hardly say that in many ages of the world it has not been so regarded, as it is not so regarded to-day in many European countries [...] But there is undoubtedly a very wide-spread feeling amongst thoughtful Englishmen, with which speaking for myself I most heartily agree, that the law as it at present stands altogether steps outside its province in taking any cognizance of this thing in itself, and is an exceedingly pernicious law which ought to be repealed.<sup>184</sup>

In the masterful rhetoric that follows, Image's article in *The Church Reformer* mirrors much of the work of homosexual apologist writers such as John Addington Symonds and Edward Carpenter.<sup>185</sup> He argues that all other crimes are so defined by their negative impact upon innocent parties, such as in the cases of public drunkenness and thievery; "but it punishes the man who indulges in this form of sensuality for the mere sensuality itself." Image's assessment of this disparity is that homosexuality is outlawed because it is "sinful." The law's hypocrisy in this matter is then highlighted in the fact that

the sin of adultery with its much more immediate effect upon society it takes no notice of as criminal at all [...] in this *sole* instance, the law punishes a man for a particular action because it has determined that the action is a sin. (Image's italics.)

The result of the law as it stands is a gross interference with "individual liberty in the sphere in which it is on the whole of the highest benefit to society that the individual liberty should be paramount." The secrecy and opportunity for blackmail that are the

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<sup>184</sup> Undated cutting from *The Church Reformer*. Image notes that he is writing on "the eve, probably, of Mr. Wilde's trial" therefore leading to a speculative date of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1895. Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310, 318.

<sup>185</sup> See chapter 4 "Modes of Defence" White, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality* 116-235.

results of the present law lead to immeasurable “distress” and “incalculable evil.” In using the terminology of religion, Image places homosexuality within the same bracket as sensuous art in that it is opposed to puritanical Christianity, and Image-the-Libertine maintains that, like art, the Law should not be influenced by religious intolerance. This article also has an impact upon so many of Image’s writings examined thus far, in that here the term “sensuality” is clearly a necessary substitute for the more accurate “sexuality.” Viewed in such a light, Image’s “gospel of sensuousness” and his attack on puritanism’s fevered opposition to “the free life of the senses,”<sup>186</sup> may indeed be read as being much more direct references to sexual libertinism.

Throughout the writings of Selwyn Image there is sufficient evidence to assert that conventional morality was far from being a guiding force in his life. As John Tosh notes, profound physical restrictions on young women in the middle classes ensured that “middle-class girls were off limits” to young middle-class men. “Sexual experience,” he concludes, “meant crossing class lines.”<sup>187</sup> This is precisely what Image did in his befriending young female performers in the music halls and ultimately marrying a dancer. Indeed, Image’s marriage is unconventional in almost every aspect, when compared to Tosh’s outline of respectable middle-class constructions of masculinity. He gives a rough estimate of “late marriage” due to the middle-class financial requirements for wedlock, to be when the groom is 27 years old,<sup>188</sup> and states that “indefinite delay” in marriage “was not a comfortable option

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<sup>186</sup> “The New Puritanism” *The Church Reformer*, undated cutting from 1894. Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310, 247-8.

<sup>187</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place* 107.

<sup>188</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place* 109.

for anyone who respected convention.”<sup>189</sup> Image’s “performance” of his own masculinity (when compared to Tosh’s standard) is anything but well-defined and conventional. “Only marriage could yield the full privileges of masculinity,” writes Tosh. “To form a household, to exercise authority over dependents, and to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining and protecting them – these things set the seal on a man’s gender identity.”<sup>190</sup> All of these considerations seem to be of the least importance to Image, who put off marriage until the age of 52, married well below his own social class (compounded by his wife’s, to many, “unseemly” profession) and even then, never raised a family. Clearly issues of gender definition and a clear-cut sense of masculinity were of no concern to Selwyn Image.

Image’s heterosexual desire is overtly manifest in much of his earlier, published poetry. But as mentioned in chapter one, only a very small fragment of his poetic output has yet been made publicly available, and the vast majority of his early letters and poetry are now lost. The reasons for this state of affairs are open to any and all interpretations at the present time, from the mundane to the flamboyantly sublime. In his “Bundle of Letters” a homosexual subtext is unquestionably present. Yet this is not a definitive argument for Image being bisexual. He may simply have been playing with the issues of literary censorship and enjoying “crossing the line” unnoticed and unheeded, or simply fighting the corner for homosexuality in the same way in which he allied himself with the music hall dancers. Nevertheless, he tells us in his poetry that “forbidden ways invite,” and he would have been no stranger to London’s homosexual society at the *fin-de-siècle*; locations such as the Alhambra,

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<sup>189</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place* 110.

<sup>190</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place* 108.

and even Image's home address of Fitzroy Street, are significant points on Neil Bartlett's clandestine map of homosexual Victorian London.<sup>191</sup>

Ultimately, the problem of definition in such matters as sexuality is shown to be a fundamental problem with the act of defining. Linda Dowling's Foucaultian concept of a battle for the dominant discourse at Oscar Wilde's trials is of particular relevance here.<sup>192</sup> She uses Wilde's speech on "the love that dare not speak its name" as the key example of Wilde seeking to define himself, rather than be defined by his accusers. Jeffrey Richards dwells on the same event, recalling Wilde as "classically defining the Platonic ideal," but goes on to state that the trials exposed the fact that his "conduct was the exact opposite of what he had advocated in the dock."<sup>193</sup> However, this is not an accurate appraisal of the situation. Wilde being one thing does not negate him also being another. Saint Oscar, and Sinner C.3.3. are one and the same. Wilde's personal discourse is polyphonic (though at the trials he may have wished otherwise).

Both Image and Wilde were products of a singular type of education, not merely restricted to Oxford, but also restricted to a very narrow timescale. Both had instilled in them the notion of defining one's own unique and masterful personality, and both succeeded in doing so most admirably. Although their later lives followed distinctly different paths, this notion of singularity defined them both, making either one singularly impossible to define.

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<sup>191</sup> Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man?: A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde*, Masks (London: Serpent's Tail, 1989) 147.

<sup>192</sup> See her Preface and chapter 1, Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* xi-xvi, 1-31.

<sup>193</sup> Richards, "Manly Love," 94.

## 2. From Ancient Rome to the Nouveau Renaissance: Catholicism and Hellenism in the *Hobby Horse*.

## 2.1 The Heretical *Hobby Horse*.

In the preceding chapters, it has been possible to discern how *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* was at odds with much of “mainstream” society, opposing the popular, bourgeois attitudes to both art and sexuality. The depiction of religion, and Catholic Christianity specifically, is of particular interest in this matter of opposition. The magazine abounds with references to Catholicism and its imagery, from contemporary critical works to historical studies, artwork, creative prose works and especially poetry. There is in fact so much material dealing with Catholicism that, if read in isolation, the *Hobby Horse* would give the reader the impression that late-Victorian society was not only broadly tolerant towards Catholicism, but actively promoted the faith.

However, late-Victorian bourgeois society was largely hostile towards Rome, ever since the Roman Catholic hierarchy was “re-established in England for the first time since the Reformation” on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, 1850.<sup>194</sup> For English Protestantism, such a re-affirmation of the power of the Roman Church went far beyond representing merely an act of liberation in the history of British religious sectarianism. A great number of Victorians, and especially “the Evangelical and Broad Church parties [believed that] the historic links between Church and State under the Crown were key to the nation’s material prosperity,” and that in these circumstances “politics and religion were inseparable.”<sup>195</sup> Indeed, to many, the

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<sup>194</sup> Patrick O’ Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture (Cambridge: CUP, 2006) 7.

<sup>195</sup> Michael Wheeler, *The Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in Nineteenth-Century English Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006) 3.

words "Protestant" and "England" were practically synonymous. George Moore, an Irish convert to both Protestantism and English national identity, proclaimed, "England is Protestantism, Protestantism is England."<sup>196</sup> Consequently this act of "Papal Aggression" was seen as "an invasion of the supremacy of the Crown" by many,<sup>197</sup> and even "a form of violence, at the intersection of national invasion and rape."<sup>198</sup> Moore's adopted nationalism leads him to express the polarised position of the Roman and English Churches in profoundly jingoistic terms, not unlike the fevered rantings of Another British Matron: "Protestantism is strong, clean and westernly, Catholicism is eunuch-like, dirty and Oriental." What is immediately apparent in such views is the alliance of Protestantism with British nationalism and normative sexuality, whereas "there is a persistent conjunction of tropes of Catholicism with those of non-normative sexual expression" allied to national "otherness."<sup>199</sup> Indeed, there is much in O'Malley, Ellis Hanson and David Hilliard's depiction of late Victorian perceptions of Catholicism to support the notion that the sexual deviation inherent in concepts of monasticism, the celibacy of the Priesthood and the notion of virgin motherhood, underpinned a significant proportion of Protestant opposition to the faith.<sup>200</sup> Hanson makes the valid observation that "anti-Catholicism has always been the pornography of the Puritan,"<sup>201</sup> as the infamous tract *The Confessional Unmasked* (1851) ably demonstrates. The work's full title, *The Confessional Unmasked: Showing the Depravity of the Priesthood, Questions put to Females in Confession, Perjury and Stealing Commanded and*

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<sup>196</sup> Cited Wheeler, *The Old Enemies* 290.

<sup>197</sup> Wheeler, *The Old Enemies* 4-5.

<sup>198</sup> O' Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* 3.

<sup>199</sup> O' Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* 3.

<sup>200</sup> Alongside O'Malley, see Ellis Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997), David Hilliard, "Unenglish and Unmanly: Anglo-Catholicism and Homosexuality," *Victorian Studies* 25 (1982).

<sup>201</sup> Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* 264.



*Encouraged, &c., &c.*, gives some idea as to the content therein. However, the bulk of the material deals with sexual matters, and the details into which the writer delves in his attempt to portray the Priesthood's depravity, are surprisingly explicit.

The tract explores the alleged Catholic attitudes to adulterous women, schoolboy masturbation, sex in the Confessional itself, including rape, the detailed questioning of women over their sexual habits by the Priesthood, quite a thorough examination of both the male and female act of "spending," and a section on the Catholic guide to sinful, and sin-free, sexual positions, which the editor prefaces thus:

Our *bachelor* Saint now expatiates upon the various possible postures, and other delicate matters. We think very few of our *married* friends could compose such a *masterpiece* of matrimonial mysteries.<sup>202</sup>

The writer's fervour in detailing the sexual depravity of the priesthood leads to the inclusion of such "old songs" as "The Fryar and the Nun," which opens with the lines "A lovely lass to a Fryar came, / to confess in the morning early" only to find that the price of absolution for her sexual sins is to repeat them with the Priest himself, there and then.<sup>203</sup> For many modern readers, such aspects make it rather difficult to take Bryce's pamphlet seriously as a theological work. However, many mid to late-Victorian protestants took the work very seriously indeed, which is manifest by the fact that it was republished by the Protestant Electoral Union in

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<sup>202</sup> [David Bryce], *The Confessional Unmasked: Showing the Depravity of the Priesthood, Questions Put to Females in Confession, Perjury and Stealing Commanded and Encouraged, &c., &c.*, (London: Allman, 1851) 58. Bryce's italics.

<sup>203</sup> [Bryce], *Confessional Unmasked* 38.

1867, and was also “sold in anticipation” of the riot-inducing “No Popery” lectures by the likes of the former Catholic, Patrick Murphy.<sup>204</sup>

It was at one of Murphy’s lectures in Wolverhampton, in February 1867, that legal history was made regarding the Obscene Publications Act, and the outcome of which clearly shows the *Confessional Unmasked* to be a work of pornography. James Quirke maintains that Murphy brought copies of the pamphlet with him, 252 of which were found in the possession of a “Mr Scott, of Waterloo Road” after “the Watch Committee banned the sale of this book.”<sup>205</sup> These were seized by police, and Scott was found guilty of “selling an obscene publication,” under the 1857 Act. However, Scott won an appeal on the grounds that the “intent” of the work was not “to corrupt or deprave,” but to present a case against Catholicism. It was indeed this ruling that led Chief Justice Cockburn to amend the Act on 29 April 1868, arguing that the “intent of the pamphlets was held to be irrelevant, effectively meaning that a work was not considered in the round, but page by page.”<sup>206</sup> From this, Cockburn formulated his 1868 Amendment, reclassifying the legal definition of pornography as that which has a corrupting influence on those “into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall.” Scott’s original guilty verdict was upheld, and *The Confessional Unmasked* became a landmark in the history of pornography in Britain.

This event is most interesting in itself, as it marks a point at which Protestant piety and pornography collapse into one another. It also demonstrates the ferocity of the

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<sup>204</sup> Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* 266.

<sup>205</sup> James Quirke, “Roman Catholicism in Wolverhampton 1828 – 1865,” Feb 2002. *Wolverhampton History and Heritage Society*. 17 Oct. 2007.

< <http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk/articles/catholics/jq00.htm> >

<sup>206</sup> “The Hicklin Case,” *The Obscene Publications Act, 1857*, 30 Jan. 2002. *BBC H2G2*. 17 Oct. 2007. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A679016>>

anti-Catholic movement within Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Bryce and Murphy went to such lengths as manipulating what was legally defined as pornography in an attempt to blacken the Catholic faith and to uphold and promote clean-living Protestantism. This link between perceived Catholicism and sexual degeneracy ably demonstrates the fact that those who opposed the spread of Catholicism held much in common with those who opposed the Nude in pictorial art and the anti-music-hall lobby. Hence, on a theoretical level, the Century Guild's artists and Catholicism were allied in their sharing a common foe. As sexuality became a blazon for the defiant artist, so might the Church of Rome. Furthermore, the strength of anti-Catholic sentiments inherent in the works of the likes of Bryce and Murphy easily demonstrate the subversive power of any pro-Catholic rhetoric, such as that found within the *Hobby Horse*.

There are, however, two articles which belie the popular view of "Papism," or the "Romanists," to give them their harder-edged epithets that abounded at the time: the very recently de-frocked Arthur Galton's review of Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends of Ireland* (II, vi, 67) and Ernest Dowson's short story, "A case of Conscience" (VI, xxi, 9).<sup>207</sup> In the review, Lady Wilde's book, like Galton's article "Assisi" (I, iii, 95), acts as a pole from which the writer flies his flag of Celtic revivalism. It does, however, begin by framing the book on fairy tales within the terms of Ireland's ultimate "otherness" – Catholicism: "The *Pall Mall Gazette*, some little time ago, described its contemporary, *The Tablet*, as a window through which Englishmen could look, with much advantage to themselves, on to the world of Catholic Europe."

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<sup>207</sup> Galton was a convert to Rome, but left the Church in 1885 and became a fervent Anglican later in life, when he published passionate, yet measured arguments against the Church of Rome. These will be discussed in later chapters.

(II, vi, 67.) Galton's review goes on to illustrate how Lady Wilde's work would be a more suitable window through which the curious Englishman may peer.

Nevertheless, the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s article clearly depicts continental Catholics as being in contrast, and inferior, to "Englishmen." In doing so, the article echoes the fevered diatribe of "Another British Matron" in the *Times* (May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1885) who feared that an attitude towards nude painting akin to "our neighbours across the channel" would inevitably lead to the "stealthy, steadfast advances of the cloven hoof." Both newspapers reflect widely held views that the continental Catholics were inferior and degraded, in comparison to their English, Protestant counterparts, with the latter hinting none too discretely at a sexual element to such degradation.

The issue of Catholicism and sexuality plays a key role in Dowson's short story, "A Case of Conscience" (VI, xxi, 2). The story explores the doomed love affair between a "very young" French girl and an English painter in his forties. From the outset, Dowson illustrates the differing world-views of the Protestant and Catholic faiths, which ultimately lead to a crisis of "selfhood" for the young girl, and a crisis of conscience for the man. The girl, Marie-Yvonne, tries to explain her predicament to her lover thus:

You make me afraid; of myself, chiefly; but a little of you. You suggest so much to me, that is new, strange, terrible. When you speak, I am troubled: all my old landmarks appear to vanish; I even hardly know right from wrong. I love you: my God, how I love you! but I want to go away from you and pray, in the little, quiet church, where I made my first Communion. I will come to the world's end with you; but oh! Sebastian, do not ask me (VI, xxi, 2).

Though the tale, like many of Dowson's, is obviously playing with the swirling emotions of the girl's blossoming sexuality, he clearly depicts the fundamental challenge to her as being rooted in religion. Sebastian tells her that she has "lived

overmuch in that little church, with its worm-eaten benches, and its mildewed odour of dead people, and dead ideas [...] I come to claim you, Marie-Yvonne, in the name of Life.” (VI, xxi, 3.) Likewise, Sebastian’s sober-minded friend, Tregellen, tells him that the girl could not survive in fashionable, artistic, *fin-de-siècle* London, on account of her being brought from a place “where everything is fixed for her, by that venerable old *Curé*, where life is so easy, so ordered; to yours, ours; a world, without definitions, where everything is an open question.” (VI, xxi, 8-9.)

Simple, static, continental Catholic existence is depicted as being in total contrast to modern, progressive, empirical life in Britain – the two being all but irreconcilable. Finally, the “Case of Conscience” that hangs over Sebastian’s head turns out to be his need to confess a Rochester-like “youthful folly” of a marriage to “an infamous woman,” from whom he is now divorced. Tregellen explains to his friend, and, quite pointedly, to the reader, that to marry Marie-Yvonne would constitute her “living in sin” on account of Catholicism’s refusal to recognise divorce. The tale ends with Sebastian walking, head bowed, towards the still, simple figure of his beloved as the day draws to a close.

Compared to the sentiments in the popular press quoted above, Dowson’s romance is far gentler in its treatment of the fundamental dichotomy between the two Christian faiths, though the message is, in a very broad sense, the same: Catholics are not like “us,” some may argue inferior, and moreover, they cannot become like “us” on account of their antiquated and deluded beliefs. As stated earlier, however, the vast majority of works dealing with Catholicism in the *Hobby Horse* depict the faith in a

positive light, and even preferential to English Protestantism, much of it by Dowson himself.

Looking at “A Case of Conscience” stylistically, there are many aspects of the tale that embody the idea of confession. Obviously, there is Sebastian’s need to confess his former marriage to his lover, but the tale itself, when read in a psychoanalytic light, reveals a certain level of confession on the part of the author. Dowson wrote several tales regarding doomed love affairs between very young, usually continental, girls, and elder men. This may indeed be read as a sublimation of his unrequited love for the Polish girl Adelaide Foltinowicz (“Missie”), whom he first met in 1891 (the year “A Case of Conscience” was published), when he was 24 and she a mere 12.<sup>208</sup> The notion of re-writing and reworking experiences in semantic form has obvious connections with the Confessional, and Dowson’s constantly revisiting this theme in his short stories displays something of the Catholic faith’s propensity for stasis as it is displayed in Sebastian’s appraisal of Marie-Yvonne’s faith when compared to progressive Protestantism.

In fact, this confessional mode of writing underpins a great deal of Dowson’s work, not least in his poetic masterpiece, “Cynara” (VI, xxii, 67). The poem recounts a night of passion with a prostitute, followed by dancing and drinking (the infamous “madder music and [...] stronger wine”). Yet amidst the reverie of kisses, wine and song, like a familiar-apparition of his own conscience, “there fell thy shadow, Cynara,” leading every stanza to the inescapable, repetitive liturgy:

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<sup>208</sup> Mark Longaker, *Ernest Dowson*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: U of Philadelphia P, 1945) 74.

yet I was desolate and sick of an old passion  
 [...]
   
 I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

Cynara, seen by some as a pseudonym for Missie,<sup>209</sup> operates as a deity or priest, to whom the poet must confess his sins of infidelity; and, rather like Wilde in *De Profundis*, Dowson transforms his sins in the retelling, and the confession becomes its own absolution – “I have been faithful to thee.” The feeling of guilt brought about by his infidelity becomes a signifier of his heart’s true and abiding fidelity, and so the guilty sin is transformed into the method by which his faithfulness may be judged. Dowson makes plain his personal debt to Catholic ritual in his poem “Benedictio Domini”, published in the new series of the renamed *Hobby Horse* in 1894, number 3, page 82.<sup>210</sup>

Without, the sullen noises of the street!  
     The voice of London, inarticulate,  
 Hoarse and blaspheming, surges in to meet  
     The silent blessing of the Immaculate.

Dark is the church, and dim the worshippers,  
     Hushed with bowed heads as though by some old spell,  
 While through the incense-laden air there stirs  
     The admonition of a silver bell.

Dark is the church, save where the altar stands,  
     Dressed like a bride, illustrious with light,  
 Where one old priest exalts with tremulous hands  
     The one true solace of man’s fallen plight.

Strange silence here: without, the sounding street  
     Heralds the world’s swift passage to the fire:  
 O Benediction, perfect and complete!  
     When shall men cease to suffer and desire?

Catholicism offers, in the form of an “old spell,” an antidote to modernity’s “swift passage to the fire;” and the priestly ritual at the altar is represented as a sublime

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<sup>209</sup> See Longaker, *Ernest Dowson* 83.

<sup>210</sup> Interestingly, when published later in book form, this poem bares the dedication “For Selwyn Image.” See Flower, ed., *The Poetical Works of Ernest Christopher Dowson* 48.

form of marriage. Once more, the static quality of ancient, unchanging ritual is thrown into sharp relief against the “inarticulate / Hoarse and blaspheming” cacophony of progressive modernity. The old church may be represented as “dark,” but the sensuous ritual, with “incense-laden air,” bridal, illuminated altar, and the admonishing “silver bell,” administers a mystic “true solace” to the soul troubled by late-nineteenth-century life. The *Hobby Horse* includes several other works by Dowson which display Catholic ritual in both subject and form, such as “The Carmelite Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration,” VI, xxiv, 136, whose “days and nights they make,” rather akin to Dowson’s own poetry, “into a long, returning rosary.” Echoing the imagery of darkness and light in “Benedictio Domini,” for the Carmelite Nuns, “Mary’s sweet star dispels for them the night / The proper darkness of humanity.” (IV, xxiv, 136.) Hanson refutes the generalisation that decadents embraced Catholicism solely for its shocking and subversive qualities, arguing that for many Catholicism offered a sincere, personal faith.<sup>211</sup> This may indeed be seen as having some veracity when considering Dowson’s works in the *Hobby Horse*. The “old spell” of Catholicism, offering stasis and solace from the madness of modernity, certainly appears to have won an honest convert in the troubled soul of Ernest Christopher Dowson.

Alongside Lionel Johnson’s flagrantly homoerotic poetry, such as “In Praise of Youth,” the *Hobby Horse* also includes several other of his poetic works, many of which are saturated with Catholic imagery. His “Two Christmas Carols,” (V, xvii, 11) are steeped in the veneration of Mary, with liturgical Latin refrains. His poem, “In Honorem Beatae Virginis Marie De Winton,” (IV, xxi, 14) is composed entirely

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<sup>211</sup> Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* 14.



in Latin, and honours the memory of four fifteenth-century Catholic martyrs. Ian Fletcher cites this particular poem of Johnson's in his illustration of the "cult of early Christian Latin poetry," which developed in the 1880s and early '90s.<sup>212</sup> Johnson's imagery of romantic martyrdom is Roman in every aspect:

Per Crucifixi Sanguinem;  
Per vitam Matris humilem:  
Matris monstrate gloriam,  
Et Crucifixi regiam.

Maria! nonne Mater es?  
Filiis audi supplices:  
Misericors in miseros,  
Pacis ad vias trahe nos.

For the repressed, criminalised homosexual Catholic, the bodily suffering of the martyr was an obvious icon ripe for all manner of sublimation. The many depictions of Saint Sebastian, for example, portray a beautiful youth, whose body has been pierced, and for whom unjust suffering will bring spiritual rewards. The notion of martyrdom, and "public shaming" was a central facet of the character of Oscar Wilde – so much so that he famously took the suffering Sebastian's name during his final years of exile. As Hanson remarks, Catholicism provided Wilde with the "ideal stage": "For his dandyism and aestheticism, there was beautiful ritualism and passionate faith. For his taste for scandal, there was a discourse of sin. And for his aesthetic and sexual martyrdom, there was the language of penitence and hagiography."<sup>213</sup> The poetic works of Lionel Johnson in the *Hobby Horse* reflect a similar set of reasons for Johnson's embracing of the faith, with Hanson again stating that "we find Lionel Johnson retreating to his room with its bust of Newman and its well-thumbed theological texts, even as he lived a life of alcoholism and homosexual

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<sup>212</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 74.

<sup>213</sup> Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* 231.

guilt rivalled only by Verlaine.”<sup>214</sup> The idea of Johnson sublimating his sexuality within Catholicism gains weight when Edgar Jepson’s memories of the man are considered. Jepson juxtaposes the statement that Johnson had never “desired a woman in his life” with the following sentence: “He had become, or became a little later, a Roman Catholic.”<sup>215</sup> Although a little disparaging as to Johnson’s suitability to the faith, Jepson goes on to describe how he was “still under the influence of Pater, still forming himself on ‘Marius the Epicurean’” and describes his habit of “assuming the attitude of a mysterious and very superior Pontiff.”<sup>216</sup> In Lionel Johnson one may find an example of the troubled homosexual who could find some solace in the rituals and authority of the Catholic Church, albeit with a distinct colouring of Paterian philosophy.

Certainly, the Catholic “discourse of sin,” and the inherent “shame” of the Confessional could prove singularly attractive to the decadent homosexual. By the 1890s, the word “shame” had become virtual code for “homosexuality,” as is ably demonstrated by Johnson’s fellow Oxonian, Bosie Douglas’s poetry in *The Chameleon*; and it is significant to note that, as mentioned earlier, Douglas’ poetry appears to owe a great deal to that of Johnson.

In both Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson, therefore, one may find examples of those who found in Catholicism a personal faith, offering respite from the modern world, and for whom the imagery and rituals of Catholicism had a certain appeal. Johnson’s faith almost certainly contains some degree of sublimated sexuality, and it

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<sup>214</sup> Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* 245.

<sup>215</sup> Edgar Jepson, *Memories of a Victorian*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (London: Gollancz, 1933) 213.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

is possible that for Dowson, part of the need for such a comfort in traditions may have been born out of his unrequited love for Missie.

Hence the few works examined here ably depict the general oppositional nature of the relationship between broad, Protestant Victorianism and a more continental notion of Catholicism. Illustrating Hanson's assertion, Johnson and Dowson's Catholic faith was not founded solely on an act of revolt, but is a sincere adoption of a religious faith that better suited their psychological, emotional and spiritual needs. However, the vast majority of the works within the *Hobby Horse* dealing with Catholicism cannot really be classed as "religious" at all. The interaction between Catholicism and art that takes place within the magazine's pages is a purely aesthetic affair, quite disassociated from any notions of a religious faith. Alongside the plenitude of Catholic art in the *Hobby Horse*, such as paintings depicting Catholic iconography and openly Catholic poetry, there is a rich vein of criticism dealing with Catholicism in relation to art. It is within these works that the final category of would-be converts may be found, those for whom Catholicism represented a means of opposing and shocking the puritanical sections of society, particularly those who had instigated the attack upon Art, in the letters to *The Times*. From within this section of the *Hobby Horse*'s central coterie emerges a new, purely aesthetic form of Catholicism, as Selwyn Image, Arthur Galton and Herbert Horne develop a theoretical form of the Church of Rome, which they depict as being the very saviour of Art itself.

## 2.2 Posing as a Romanist: The Disingenuous Mr Image.

In much of his writing in the *Hobby Horse*, Selwyn Image demonstrates a tendency to cloak his personal life and opinions in ambiguity. His statement regarding The Century Guild, that he is “not formally of their number” (II, v, 2), coupled with the fact that he was a co-founder of the Guild, a regular, major contributor to the Guild’s magazine throughout its ten-year publication history, and a figure of varying seniority amongst its editorial team over the years, ably demonstrates Image’s curious desire to elude classification. Similarly his literary dabbling in illicit sexuality, as is apparent in “A Bundle of Letters,” may lead to speculation, though never certainty, regarding his sexuality. In matters of religion, Image is equally difficult to pin down. Sylvia Tickner’s admirable thesis on his life and work illustrates this religious ambiguity, stating that Image himself was anti-Rome, anti-Puritan, anti-Abstinence, yet curiously pro-Wesleyan.<sup>217</sup> This precarious definition of Image’s religious sympathies becomes even more unstable when one examines his religious poetry. Image, the former Anglican clergyman, composed Christmas poems annually. Throughout the magazine’s history, these were contributed to the *Hobby Horse*, typically published in the following January editions, and “A Christmas Carol” (II, v, 18) is fairly representative of the whole in its overtly Catholic imagery, with the final stanza exhorting,

Yea, Lady Mary, Mother of God,  
Save us from sin’s rod!  
Lady Mary, Mother of Grace,  
O Lady Mary, bring us at length  
By strength of Jesus to Jesus’ strength!

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<sup>217</sup> Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 17.

The poem quotes directly from the Catholic liturgy in its veneration of Mary, and the plea for her to act as an intermediary between sinner and Christ is a central facet of Catholic doctrine - something which would have been quite unacceptable to any pure-blooded English Protestant of the time. Re-examining Image's poetry cited earlier, the confessional mode of writing, such as that found in the works of Dowson, is also a common feature of his work. "De Profundis" (1894) details the writer's weakness for "forbidden ways" and "smiling [...] sweet" sins, leading him to a confession of "courage [that] ebbs away," resulting in his cup being filled with "failures to the brim." Although varying greatly in style and subject, this poem could be seen in a similar, confessional light to Dowson's "Cynara."

Many of Image's critical works in the magazine also appear to promote Catholicism, or explore failings in Protestantism. These works are written in Image's familiar, double-edged and disingenuous style, as may be seen by revisiting his article which opens the rejuvenated *Hobby Horse* in January 1886, "On the Representation of the Nude."

In taking on the "British Matron," Image gave many the impression that his subtle critique was in agreement with Horsley's sentiments. His letter to Mackmurdo, explaining "I would sooner certainly that people did not think me [...] an embracer of British Matrons" in response to the *Scotsman*'s misinterpretation of his work makes plain his allegiance to sensuous Art as opposed to Puritanism.<sup>218</sup> However, the reason why the *Scotsman*, and subsequent readers of this work, were so completely misled in understanding Image's point of view is that this skilfully

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<sup>218</sup> The Letters of S. Image to A. H. Mackmurdo. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Letters e.38, 188.

parodic work apes Protestant Puritanism with scrupulous accuracy. As stated earlier, Image cites St. Paul and the Gospel in his attempt to define the opposing parties of asceticism and sensuality. The practice of examining the Scriptures in order to reach an absolute is a quintessentially Protestant activity. In quoting Christ's message of sin being committed in the heart, not solely the body, and Paul's assertion that to wilfully sin is to re-crucify Christ, Image reaches an absolute that resolutely opposes the sensuous world of the Artist; as he states, "the spirit of Christ is uncompromising" (I, i, 10). The case of the "Matron," and all her fevered acolytes is therefore declared "unanswerable." (I, i, 12.)

Should one read this article with no knowledge of Image's other works, both critical and creative, it is plausible that one might conclude, as did the *Scotsman*, that the writer sided with the puritans. However, in the following article, "On the Theory that Art should Represent the Surrounding Life" (I, i, 13),<sup>219</sup> Image begins to deconstruct the very method that he used to reach his previous, absolute assertion. The item opens with the statement that "theories, as we all know, are often dangerous; for they have an absolute, a final way of dealing with things, and that is not the way in which most human interests satisfactorily stand being dealt with." (I, i, 13.) On the subject in hand, Image concludes that if art must represent surrounding life alone (an assertion popularly held at the time, and trumpeted in "in the daily papers"), this reduces all fine art to merely mimicking photography. Image opposes this notion, claiming that "the region of Art is in the imagination" (I, i, 15) and illustrates his case with examples of art from the Renaissance onwards. However,

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<sup>219</sup> The two articles, along with a third "On Art and Nature" are numbered as parts I to III of the same work.

this article, when coupled with its predecessor on “the Nude,” strikes a broadside against the Protestant empirical approach to Scripture. The notion of absolutes, such as Scripture’s fundamental opposition to sensuality, stands opposed to “most human interests.”

“On the Representation of the Nude” is unique amongst Image’s contributions to the *Hobby Horse*, albeit that its subject matter is a common thread throughout much of his writing. The reason for this is that Image “wrote” a letter to the magazine (a curious gesture for one who co-edited the publication), seeking to clarify any ambiguities in his earlier article. Image declares “there has been so much misunderstanding amongst your readers and critics of my Note in your last issue upon ‘The Representation of the Nude,’ that I have been asked to write a few lines of explanation.” What follows makes plain the fact that Image’s intent in writing the original article was not to define a Scriptural response to the issue of nude paintings, in the manner of Horsley, but was indeed a pointed critique of contemporary Protestant Christianity. He explains his position thus:

allow me to point out that I do not say that the Spirit of Art is in antagonism with the Spirit of Religion, as Religion may be conceivably understood; nor even with that which nowadays we call Christianity; but simply that it is in antagonism with the Spirit of the New Testament – an altogether different assertion, I venture to submit. (I, ii, 80.)

To the Victorian Protestant, such a claim could surely only act as further antagonism. For a religion rooted in, nay born out of, the practice of Scriptural analysis, Image’s assertion runs contrary to the belief that the true, singular form of Christianity is to be gleaned from the writings of the New Testament. As the letter progresses, Image shatters the Protestant view of a “pure,” singular concept of Christianity:

For that which nowadays we call Christianity is an inheritance not only from the New Testament, but from things quite other than the New Testament, from things wholly pagan as well. If we are children of Christ and the Apostolic Teachers, we are children of the Renaissance too, and the Renaissance was essentially “a return towards the pagan spirit.”

This argument has obvious parallels with Pater’s essay on Winckelmann, where he states that “the broad foundation [...] of all religions [...] is a universal pagan sentiment, a paganism which existed before the Greek religion, and has lingered far onward into the Christian world, ineradicable” (*WPR*, 160). Taking this particularly incendiary thesis as accepted fact, Image concludes by declaring that “the sooner [...] we see this plainly and confess it to ourselves, and arrange our lives in accordance with the recognition of it, the better.” A narrow-minded and self-censorious view of the matter can only result in us doing “ourselves and the world vital and unnecessary harm.” Image’s message is thus clear: popular, Protestant Christianity should not oppose the pagan spirit of sensuality in art, because Christianity is itself multifaceted and part pagan.<sup>220</sup>

The January issue for 1887 begins with an article of Image’s entitled “On the Unity of Art,” which celebrates the *Hobby Horse*’s survival for one year (“the editors may be genuinely congratulated and exhorted to see that they lose not the gods’ goodwill through any failure in returning humble thanks” II, v, 2) and restates one of the magazine’s chief *causes célèbres*. “On the Unity of Art” has art as its subject, but uses religious terminology, which would invite the reader to apply his critique

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<sup>220</sup> Indeed, such a thesis would appear to pre-empt J. G. Frazer’s tentative conclusions over the origins of Christianity in his groundbreaking anthropological work, *The Golden Bough* (1890), four years after Image was writing. In his examination of pagan rituals, Frazer is led to speculate that the Passion of Christ was not unique and Divinely ordered, but represented several pre-existing, quasi-magical, pagan traditions. See James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, ed. Robert Fraser. Oxford World Classics (London: OUP, 1994) 666.



equally to religion and art. Looking back over the Guild's four-year history, Image reflects upon the organisation's inception, or, as he phrases it, when they "began to preach and work." (II, v, 3.) Following on from his theory in the article on "Art Representing the Surrounding Life," Image attacks the empirical practice of seeking ultimate definitions: "Definitions are proverbially difficult things: definitions in matters of extreme delicacy, one might say of intangibility, such as Religion or Art, are extremely difficult things" (II, v, 4). Hence, akin to his rhetoric in the two articles on the "Nude" and "Surrounding Life," Image implies a critique of Religion in his writing about Art. As the article continues, he once again outlines the absurdity of an ultimately empirical approach to either subject:

nay, you may really say, that if in such matters you have set yourself on defining, with such inevitable accuracy, that you will cover every spot and outlet of the ground, so that nobody else can escape or attack you,- you have set yourself something that is impossible.

The main thrust of the piece is an attack on the popularly held presumption that the word "art" is synonymous with "oil painting," with Image suggesting that perhaps the Royal Academy of Arts be renamed "the Royal Academy of Oil-Paintings" (II, v, 7). Countering this single-faceted approach to art, the author outlines his belief in a coming change in the perception of art:

when a man comes to believe in the Unity of Art [...] he will think it curious, that all the years, and funds, and eloquent after-dinner speeches of individuals distinguished in Church and State have gone by, and left men content with so little. But he will, if he is a sound-minded person, not tear his hair or rage [...] but quietly he will say what he thinks, and explain his difficulties, when the times come: and live in the faith that "salvation draweth nigh."

This religious phraseology continues as Image recounts a recent gathering of artists:

when sixty or seventy men come together, as they came together a week or two since in Chelsea – sixty or seventy men, among whom the picture-painters were in a secure majority, - and say with great determination that there can be no National Exhibition of Art, in which all its forms have not their proper representation. There are many of us, who may smile at these revolutionists, or pass them over contemptuously: but the future lies not with us who smile and are content, perhaps; the future may lie with them. Not easily do old prejudices die, nor the scales fall of men's eyes. (II, v, 8.)

Having already stated that Religion and Art share the characteristic of being impossible to define, Image's use of Scripture to illustrate his argument for more diversity in popular conceptions of art only serves to strengthen the implication that the same applies to matters of religion: just as the popularly blinkered view of art as being merely oil painting is misguided, so is the Protestant view of a singular, "pure" form of Christianity. Indeed, this is the very essence of his intended message in "On the Representation of the Nude," according to his explanatory letter.

Image's "Critical Notice" on "Mr. Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*" (III, ix, 14) continues this preoccupation with the "broad canvas" in matters of art, and again, religion is used to illustrate the point. After having likened Pater's creative process to the Almighty's act of Creation over six days, Image extols "pages 111-112" of *Imaginary Portraits*, which deal with the subject of Catholicism, and declares it "hard [...] not to copy these two passages out." (III, ix, 18.) His reason for not doing so is that

an artist in Literature is not to be judged by extracts, any more than an artist in Painting is to be judged by a few inches cut here and there from his canvas. It is the whole effect of Mr. Pater's work upon you that is the thing.

Thus a more open and broadminded approach is needed to appreciate Pater, as Image extolled with matters of art in general, and implied in matters of religion. Citing Pater's work on Catholicism only serves to accentuate this difference between an

inclusive approach to art, and an empirical, definitive, Protestant view of Christianity.

The first essay in the issue for June, 1888 is a review by Image of Francis Bate's pamphlet entitled "The Naturalistic School of Painting." Rather like his article "On the Unity of Art," Image infers a somewhat narrow-minded approach in Bate's work, and advocates a more open view of the subject discussed. In doing so, Image refers to the New English Art Club, "for the most part young men, trained in the technically wonderful schools in France" (III, xi, 116).<sup>221</sup> Such credentials would surely strike terror into the heart of "Another British Matron," a fact of which Image seems to be wholly conscious: he continues, lauding the fact that they are "young men enthusiastically militant against conservative traditions in Art, militant especially against our English conservative traditions." As he elaborates on his theme, Image once again attacks the notion of an empirical, proscriptive approach to art:

There is one other thing beside Nature with which Art is constantly, and properly brought into comparison, I mean of course Science. Now the object of Science is to discover, and present us with, the facts of Nature as they are in themselves, unaffected by human imagination or feeling. When Art is defined for us "only an accurate reflection of natural appearances," it is something much more like a definition of Science that we are called upon to accept, than a definition of Art. (III, xi, 119.)

Hence the process of reduction, leading to an absolute is the defining aspect of Science, and stands in total opposition to the holistic world of the Artist. As he continues, Image explains that the sphere of the Artist is humanity itself, in its entirety; and as he has so repeatedly stated, Art and Religion are similar in this respect:

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<sup>221</sup> The New English Art Club was formed in 1866, with P. Wilson Steer and Walter Sickert amongst its founder members. See Fraser Harrison, *The Dark Angel: Aspects of Victorian Sexuality* (London: Sheldon, 1977) 134.

But the essential idea of Art is the idea of something, which has its rise and energy in the imagination and feeling of human beings: its radical distinction from Nature and from Science being precisely this, that it has to do with the expression of what is human in the world, that it is the expression of human imagination and feeling, as these deal with the experiences of life." (III, xi, 119-20.)

This theory on the rightful sphere of the artist could indeed be summed up with the word "catholic," to mean wide and varied, inclusive and not proscriptive. To fail to achieve such an approach, in matters of both Art and Religion, as he espoused in "Art Representing the Surrounding Life," runs contrary to "human interests," and such a proscriptive approach to either subject can only prove to be ultimately destructive.

All of the articles above may therefore be seen as seeking to free Art from restrictions placed upon it by an empirical and reductive view of what Art "should" and "should not" be; that is to say the popularly held views that Art "should represent nature" and yet "should not represent the nude." In criticizing such an approach, Image also criticizes popular, Protestant Christianity as being firstly a source of these restrictions, as manifested in Horsley and his followers, but also as being a fellow sufferer, along with Art, as a victim of such restrictions. Having heavily, and repeatedly, criticized the Protestant Church and its effects upon the artistic community, Image lays forth his vision of artistic salvation, delivered through the means of an alternative view of Christianity in his article in July 1886, "On Catholicity of Taste."

The article begins with a repetition of Image's thesis that there is nothing "more feeble, and in the way of our advancement more obstructive than narrowness of

sympathy.” (I, iii, 91.) The inclusion of the idea of “our advancement” is an important one, and one on which the writer dwells a great deal in the following article. As “Another British Matron” sought to link artistic “decadence” with a decline in Britain’s imperial fortunes, so Image takes up this discourse of evolutionary and imperial progression in his essay on catholic taste. However, in *his* depiction of the great Chain of Being, England’s position at the apex rests not on the more typically puritanical, post-Darwinistic views of moral purity akin to those encapsulated in Nordau’s *Degeneration*, but on the idea of an artistic and cultural heritage, and the concomitant responsibility of having such great wealth:

For us, for us on whom the ends of the world are come, for us at any rate how great a thing!  
For all around us is the inheritance of the ages: all around us too is the movement of new things to come. Greece and Rome, the Middle Age and the Renaissance, the wonders of Eastern design and colour, are our possessions. (I, iii, 92.)

Recalling his “letter” explaining his stance on the Nude, Image seeks to illustrate the fact that Britain’s greatness lies in its diverse heritage, and that the richness of the Empire is in danger of being squandered by the pervasive “narrowness of sympathy,” typified by the puritan movement, as it applies, in this instance, to Art. In identifying this need in society, Image details his proposed antidote to “narrowness of sympathy,” and his model for salvation is the Catholic Church:

In the Catholic Church there are many things that move my admiration and win me; but there is nothing I think more admirable and winning, nothing indeed in which the note of Catholicity is more surely struck, than in the freedom with which she deals with the spiritual life. (I, iii, 91.)

Though the apparent subject in hand is “Taste,” and Image’s concern for Britain’s artistic and cultural heritage, his message here is quite clear: it is in its approach to

“the spiritual life” that the Catholic Church triumphs over its rivals. As Image continues in his justification for such an assertion, his tone is overtly reverential:

From St. Philip Neri or St. Francis of Sales to the Carthusians and the Trappists:- conceive the pliability, the endless variety of sympathetic methods with which the Great Mother educates her children. Far enough is she from casting them in one mould, setting them to one task, making them walk along one line: but adapting herself with the sure instinct of a genius to their various and divergent and contradictory natures she has for each of them a gracious acceptance, an end which they will heartily desire, a method which they will devotedly use.

Hence, in contrast to the Christianity rooted solely in the New Testament –

Protestantism, (as stated in his “letter”) – which opposes the sensuous world of Art,

Catholicism embraces variety, diversification and even contradiction. As Image

returns to the ostensible matter of artistic taste, he clearly contrasts the warmth and

humanity of the “Great Mother” with its cold, empirical “other,” Protestantism:

“Now in Art as in Religion it is a great thing to be of such a spirit as this, to have

such freedom from mechanical rigidity.” The contrast could not be sharper. As

stated before, Protestantism, in Image’s view, works against “human interests” and in

this article, when compared to Catholicism, it is depicted as cold, inhuman and

unnatural. Catholicism is praised as having an “excellent understanding of human

nature” (I, iii, 92) with the un-stated implication being that any such sympathies are

denied within Protestantism.

In his desire to instruct those in the sphere of Art, Image praises Catholicism in the

highest terms: “let those who serve Art learn from the great Catholic Church in her

service of Religion this, - her sympathetic temper, her indulgence and adaptability,

her gracious acceptance of all sorts and conditions of men.” For Image,

Catholicism’s inclusivity is reason enough for the faith to be applauded. This praise

completely sidesteps the empirical Protestant evaluation of Catholicism, as summed up by the re-Anglicanised Galton, that it “has no valid basis in Scripture or in history.”<sup>222</sup> Image’s version of Catholicism exists in a theoretical space, and focuses on the *behaviour* of the Church, rather than the *doctrine* that so unsettled Galton. The reason for this is that what Image seeks to illustrate is the opposition of the *behaviour* of the Roman Church to that of the Protestant Church, as it is manifest in those seeking to restrict the world of the Artist. Hence, in terms of both Art and Religion, Image argues for tolerance and acceptance:

Ah! my friends, why will you always be complaining because the dish that is before you has not the condiments and flavour of that one? Is there not some unreasonableness in you to be so out of sympathy with a thing for not being other than it is? some deficiency of inspiration, shall we call it? that stops your recognition of its really admirable qualities;- and they are the qualities for which it alone makes, you must remember? – But I shall be exceedingly careful in what I am venturing to hint. (I, iii, 93)

Once more, Image almost goes so far as to state his case overtly, but he shies away from the final hurdle. His case for Art depends upon his case for Religion, but as ever, Image shrinks from directly telling his reader what to believe. That Art, and the puritan’s censorious approach to Art, is his specific target in the article is in no doubt, as he precedes the quotation above with a pointed condemnation of Horsley’s “Matron”:

And what charming and intelligent people can we all remember, who because they have failed in this catholic temper have at times been so irritating and oppressive; who have lost in their own lives so much enjoyment; who in the cause of Art have been really something of obstructionists. (I, iii, 92.)

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<sup>222</sup> Arthur Galton, *Our Attitude Towards English Roman Catholics, and the Papal Court*, The Church's Outlook, 2nd ed. (London: Elliot Stock, 1902) viii.

Horsley's puritanical approach to Art is "irritating," "oppressive" and "obstructionist." Image's proposed antidote to such behaviour is catholicity of temper, if not indeed Catholicity of faith. However, as the article draws to a close, Image moves towards a more pagan, almost pantheistic approach to his subject, rather than promoting Catholicism exactly:

Do not go demanding everywhere your own idols. In many shrines learn to worship the Divinity which is revealed entirely at none. For sensitiveness, for flexibility, for an inexhaustible capacity of appreciation, send up your perpetual prayers. (I, iii, 93.)

Although advocating catholicity, it would appear that paganism is actually Image's ideal for both Religion and Art. However, the closing lines of the article are singularly disingenuous, as Image attempts to throw a veil over the actual details of his argument, when he cites, perhaps with a touch of irony, Pope. The great author's letters are briefly discussed, and a section is quoted thus:

will you give me leave to add there are the same in Divinity; where many leading critics are for rooting up more than they plant, and would leave the Lord's Vineyard either very thinly furnished, or very oddly trimmed. (I, iii, 94.)

The sober Selwyn Image is then lead to sit back and reflect wisely "'There are the same in Divinity.' – Ah! yes; and there are the same in Art too, alas!"

Thus in his many works aimed at defending the realm of the artist, Image is lead to promote Catholicism as the ideal model of inclusivity, incorporating the paganism of the Classical world and the sensuousness of Art – both being aspects of humanity which contemporary Protestantism would appear to deny. The dogmatic and political aspects of Catholicism play no part of Image's appraisal of the faith within the *Hobby Horse*, but they are referred to in his diary and poems, casting a very



different shadow on the religion as a whole. On Sunday September 13<sup>th</sup> 1908, Image records in his diary the troubles in London over the (unsuccessful) attempt to carry “the Host” through London’s streets at the 18<sup>th</sup> Eucharistic Congress.<sup>223</sup> Indeed, Image was so moved by the political machinations he perceived as lying beneath the Catholic pageantry that he wrote the poem “For the Present Occasion: Sept. 9 ... 13 1908”:

Oh! The Pope o’ Rome, and The Pope o’ Rome,  
Ha! Ha! cried he, for Old England!  
My faithful Legate, a word in your ear;  
Draw nigh, and I’ll whisper, lest anyone hear.  
Now I want you to go a few days from home  
On a jaunt and it’s over The Water!

A good while since, and I ruled, you know,  
Ha! Ha! I ruled in Old England!  
Fine times were they, when I drew their Pence,  
The amount flowing was indeed immense,  
For my will was law over high and low  
In that charming land, my Daughter!<sup>224</sup>

The Pope then recounts the loss of England to Protestantism, but proclaims that, “I’ve kept my eye on ‘em ever since” and, through means of the Congress and Catholic expansion in general, the time will come when “once again / I’ve got tight grip of my Daughter.”<sup>225</sup>

This poem in isolation paints Image as a staunch advocate of English Protestant protectionism, depicting the Pope as an evil and devious, avaricious beast that must be repelled at all costs. The clear threat to English national identity that Image saw

<sup>223</sup> Diary of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. d. 349, 29.

<sup>224</sup> Poems: S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Poet d.115, 134. This poem would appear to be in Mackmurdo’s first draft for the 1932 edition of Image’s poetry, but was not included in the final published edition.

<sup>225</sup> It is a reasonable assumption that this poem was the basis for Tickner’s assertion that Image was “anti-Rome.”

as the Papal intent underlying the Congress appears to place him closer to the opinions of the later anti-Roman writings of Arthur Galton, not to mention “Another British Matron” in *The Times*. Notwithstanding, this is the same man who wrote to his sister Annie “I am a heathen of the heathens, I am a catholic of the catholics. I do the most fervent worship before the graves of the martyrs, and the ruins of the temples of Venus” whilst staying at the Hôtel Costanzi in Rome.<sup>226</sup> This letter was written a quarter of a century before the above poem, which could lead to the assumption that Image changed his opinion of Catholicism over the years, as did Arthur Galton. However, in contrast to the young Galton, Catholicism was never a personal religious creed, upon whose validity Image’s own salvation lay. As the letter to Annie displays, Catholicism and Classicism are aesthetic creeds, whose temples and tombs share the same hallowed ground of Imperial Rome. The political reality of the modern Roman Church stands apart from Image’s theoretical, aesthetic Catholicism, within which the spirit of True Art may find respite, succour and inspiration.

For Image, therefore, Catholicism is a suitable religious conduit for his own artistic ideal, namely freedom for the artist, allowing him to fully explore and depict the world of sensuality that is the very cornerstone of Art. Image’s desire is most definitely not to become a Catholic in any doctrinal sense, but to model both his art, and perhaps his religion, on a Classical model. His repeated allusions to Greece and Rome, and paganism in general, display his veneration of the Hellenic traditions, not only in Art, but also in life as a whole. He advocates a catholic view of life, in order

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<sup>226</sup> Letter to Annie Image, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1883. Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 51.

to include Classical traditions, but illustrates such a theoretical standpoint by examining Catholicism itself.

In comparison to the exclusive and ascetic traditions of Protestantism, Catholicism is therefore a more suitable theoretical setting for any discussion over the morality of Art. This theorising is drawn from the behaviour of the Catholic Church, rather than its dogma, or political manifestation, and is brought in comparison with the behaviour of Protestantism (in particular, ascetic puritanism) whose dogmatic beliefs force a much more proscriptive view of Art. As Sylvia Tickner ably testifies, Image “could not tolerate puritanism in the arts,”<sup>227</sup> and so posing in a Catholic’s garb represented a suitable platform from which to set forth an alternative vision of Christianity’s approach towards the arts, as opposed to that being trumpeted in the conservative press. No doubt, for the rebellious Image, who might playfully trifle with illicit sexuality in literature, Catholicism also appealed to “his taste for scandal,” as Hanson commented about Wilde.<sup>228</sup> Therefore, for Selwyn Image, Catholicism offered a suitable theoretical viewpoint, from which he could ably criticise Protestantism’s attacks upon Art, with perhaps a frisson of shocking behaviour. In the chapters that follow, one may discern how from this basis, Image and other writers in the *Hobby Horse* developed the idea of Catholicism as a friend to the artist in their defence of Art against the puritans.

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<sup>227</sup> Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 475.

<sup>228</sup> Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* 231.

### 2.3 Arthur Galton: A Christian Turned Turk, and Back Again.

Arthur Galton, in many ways akin to Selwyn Image, remains a shadowy presence in the history of English literature; in fact, unlike Image, Galton does not at present have a personal record in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Where he is mentioned, it is most frequently in connection with the Australian writer Frederic Manning (1882-1935) whom Galton tutored whilst working as “private secretary to Sir Robert Duff, governor of New South Wales from 1893 to 1895.”<sup>229</sup> The *DNB*’s entry for Manning states that he “accompanied Galton to England in 1898, and returned to Australia in 1900, but settled in England for good in 1903, taking lodgings with Galton, who was by then vicar of Edenham, Lincolnshire.”<sup>230</sup> These biographical fragments obviously only dwell upon Galton’s effect upon the young writer, and as such, offer a particularly limited view of the man in later life. Indeed, these sources paint a rather unsympathetic portrait of the older Galton. Speculating as to the reasons why Manning joined the British infantry in the First World War, Hibberd postulates, “perhaps Manning was driven by Galton’s loathing of Germany, or perhaps by the chance of freedom from the vicarage.” Similarly, when searching for the germ of Manning’s literary creativity, Hibberd once again portrays Galton in a distinctly unflattering light:

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<sup>229</sup> “Manning, Frederic (1882-1935),” *Project Gutenberg of Australia: Dictionary of Australian Biography*. 17 Oct. 2007. <<http://gutenberg.net.au/dictbiog/0-dict-biogMa-Mo.html>>.

<sup>230</sup> Dominic Hibberd, “Manning, Frederic (1882-1935).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 14<sup>th</sup> April. 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/article/38320>>.

Sensitive and unassertive, Manning seems to have been dominated by the increasingly ill-tempered, reactionary vicar, who hoped he would write a masterpiece. Manning laboured in vain on a historical novel, and read widely in the classics and philosophy, enjoying the great sceptics and sharing Galton's scorn for Roman Catholicism (although he never quite deserted the faith).

The Australian *Gutenberg* article also mentions Galton's religious convictions, though with a somewhat more neutral tone:

Galton was a university man who had joined the Roman Catholic Church and had become a priest in 1880. He left that ministry in 1885, was re-admitted to the Church of England in December 1898, took orders, and subsequently wrote several books on theological questions.

Indeed, the bulk of Galton's *later* literary output is given over to matters regarding the English Church and that of Rome, such as *Rome and Romanizing: Some Experiences and a Warning* (1900) and *Our Attitude Toward English Roman Catholics, and the Papal Court* (1902), alongside *The Religion of Israel* (1910) and *Church and State in France, 1300-1907* (1907). However, before his re-conversion to Anglicanism and his subsequent role in Manning's early life, Galton's writings reflect a much wider field of interests, including as they do, his reprinted works from the *Hobby Horse*, *Two Essays upon Matthew Arnold with Some of His Letters to the Author* (1897), an edition of Thomas Gordon's translation of *The Reign of Tiberius* (1890), *English Prose: from Maundeville to Thackeray* (1888), a biography of Thomas Cromwell (1887), and *Urbana Scripta: Studies of Five Living Poets, and Other Essays* (1885). These publications alone would suggest that the younger Galton is more multifaceted and informed than the depiction of him as being an embittered, xenophobic Vicar whose opinions and behaviour would drive a young ward into the trenches of the First World War. Ian Fletcher concedes that Galton is "surely a faded name in our time," but explains that during the 1880s and early '90s he "had some mild reputation as a historian with very decided views of a neo-

classical and Arnoldian cast.”<sup>231</sup> *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* would appear to be Galton’s primary outlet for these earlier views and interests, which in turn assist the modern reader in delineating a much more detailed portrait of this largely forgotten Victorian man of letters.

However, it is within those later writings on the Roman Church that one is to find the most directly autobiographical material in any of Galton’s work; and unlike the equivocal and studiously ambiguous writings of the young Selwyn Image, Galton strives, at every step, to be understood as an individual. Nevertheless, such writings should be approached with a degree of caution, as they are written by a man who was twice converted from opposing sides of the Catholic-Protestant debate; though the younger Galton is depicted, his motivations are given shape and meaning by an older self-as-editor, who holds opposing views to that younger self.

Throughout *Rome and Romanizing* the history of Galton’s personal beliefs, and the reasons for him holding those beliefs, are examined in scrupulous detail, by the later self. Galton’s initial entry into the Church was aided by the young Cambridge undergraduate’s position of not perceiving Catholicism as an alien “other” on account of his family ties with Rome.<sup>232</sup> As he states, the “aesthetic and foreign aspects of the papal Church were always familiar to me,” owing to the conversion of his eldest uncle, whom the older Galton described as having “become a deserter to the Roman Church” after being “perverted [...] by his wife.”<sup>233</sup> In what follows in

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<sup>231</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 63.

<sup>232</sup> Galton originally studied at Cambridge, but failed to take up Holy Orders on account of his imminent conversion to Rome. By the 1880s, Galton was once more a student, this time at New College, Oxford.

<sup>233</sup> Galton, *Rome and Romanizing* 11.

his chapter entitled “Why I Entered the Roman Church,” Galton’s theorizing over the attraction of Romanism touches upon several of the themes already identified in Selwyn Image’s articles praising the qualities of Catholicism. Illustrating the “broad Church” that is Catholicism, like Image, Galton describes the varied, and even contradictory, career opportunities open to a Catholic:

A Romanist, who desires to take Orders, has a various choice. I never wished to be a Monk, or a Friar; though I had, and still have, a great reverence and affection for the Benedictines. My distrust of the Jesuits, which began in the very act of my reception, grew with knowledge into a cold, fixed hatred for their system and their methods.<sup>234</sup>

As with Image’s article “On Catholicity of Taste,” for the young Galton, a blurring of the terms “catholic” (meaning “all inclusive” with a specific reference to Christianity), and “Roman Catholic” (to mean the Roman Church itself) made the Church attractive to the young author:

My ignorance misled me into confusing the terms “Catholic” and “Roman Catholic”; and my confusion was worse confounded because I had only vague and fallacious notions of what “Catholic” meant. I thought it connotated opinions and practices older than those connotated by the term “Protestant,” and contradictory to them. The Protestantism of the English Church was a reality, to which I could attach a definite and an historic meaning; but, in spite of the Liturgy and the Creeds, I never suspected that we had any serious claim to the word “Catholic,” or that we made any. I imagined that, in some antiquarian or genealogical sense, the Roman Church was superior to the English; and I thought, still more erroneously, that the modern Church of Trent and the Vatican was the Church of our mediæval ancestors.<sup>235</sup>

Very much like Image’s writings on the matter, the young Arthur Galton apparently perceived *medieval* Catholicism as an all-encompassing, more human form of Christianity, when compared to the seemingly more restrictive, Protestant Church of England.

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<sup>234</sup> Galton, *Rome and Romanizing* 27.

<sup>235</sup> Galton, *Rome and Romanizing* 14.

The idea of “erroneous,” or at least unconventional, readings of religious and social history is an important one in examining Galton’s writings on Catholicism in the *Hobby Horse*. For the young Galton, the Church of Rome offered an historical link with the ancients; and as may be gleaned from much of his earlier writings, and is typical of any disciple of Matthew Arnold, for Galton, the Classical world represented a panacea for the ailing Modern age. He states quite plainly that “Pagan Rome was far more attractive to me than papal Rome, and was an object of much deeper veneration” and that he believed that “religions were valuable and venerable in proportion to their age: that antiquity, continuity, and external organization were the most important links in the chain of truth.”<sup>236</sup> In conclusion, Galton encapsulates the reasons for his final conversion as being precisely this aspect of the Roman Church: “I had been brought to it solely by a kind of historical sense.” To Galton, the “primeval antiquity, the unaltered theology, and the exclusive catholicity of the papal sect” meant that the Church of Rome “seemed to bridge over the chasm between the New Testament and the nineteenth century in a way that was tangible and clear.”<sup>237</sup> Therefore, the chief quality that Galton appreciated within Catholicism was its providing an historical basis for joining the present with an idealized past. Much of his writing in the *Hobby Horse* must be seen in this particular light.

Where Galton’s later autobiographical work begins to diverge from his writings in the *Hobby Horse*, however, is in the matter of his leaving the Catholic Church and his subsequent opinion of Catholicism. In 1902, Galton states that, after realising that the actual dogmatic claims of the Catholic Church had “no valid basis in

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<sup>236</sup> Galton, *Rome and Romanizing* 15.

<sup>237</sup> Galton, *Rome and Romanizing* 17.



Scripture or in history,”<sup>238</sup> he felt utterly incapable of promoting the faith, and avoided parish work at all costs, declaring that “every convert to Rome was a loss and a wound to England, as well as to Christianity; and yet I was supposed to welcome, or even to seek out, converts.”<sup>239</sup> Galton certainly seems to have lost his Catholic *faith* at this point, but the concept of Catholicism representing a threat to England would appear to be an addition by the older self, which was not shared by the younger Galton writing in the *Hobby Horse*.

Galton left the Roman Church in 1885, one year before first contributing to the magazine, but did not re-enter the Anglican Church formally for another twelve years. He later describes himself during these early post-Catholic years as being “in a wholly negative position: a usual and almost necessary consequence of the Roman fever.”<sup>240</sup> However, his writings in the *Hobby Horse* depict a man still charmed by the antiquarian attractions of Romanism, and, again like Selwyn Image, formulating an intellectual and historical form of Catholicism in the service of English Art. Hence, before examining his writings on the Catholic Church specifically, it is necessary to outline his opinions on the matter of the arts, and in particular, the role played by Hellenism in his perception of “true” Art.

As might well be expected from one who penned the sonnet, “To The Century Guild” (I, iii, 87), whilst studying at Oxford, and was a confirmed acolyte of Matthew Arnold, Arthur Galton threw his literary weight behind the Guild’s chief cause: the liberation of Art from the shackles of the late-Victorian Philistines.

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<sup>238</sup> Galton, *English Roman Catholics* viii.

<sup>239</sup> Galton, *Rome and Romanizing* 39.

<sup>240</sup> Galton, *Rome and Romanizing* 26.

Echoing Selwyn Image, Galton lambasts the “daily press” and their attitude that “Art [...] must represent the life about it” in his article on “Assisi” (I, iii, 105). The same article quotes Joubert, though the sentiment might equally be attributed to Galton’s other idol, Walter Pater, “*The one aim of art is the beautiful*” (I, iii, 100; Galton’s italics). Again, restating Image’s concerns in his Article “On the Unity of Art,” in writing on the Italian Renaissance, Galton later proclaims that “Painting must not stand aloof [...] it must not be haughtily disdainful of the other branches of art” (II, v, 26). For Galton, as for Image and the Guild in general, the salvation of Art from the ever-present threat of utilitarian banality was of paramount importance.

As with many of the *Hobby Horse*’s writers, and typical of those influenced by the Oxford of Jowett, Pater and Arnold, the young Galton looked to the Hellenic world as providing a suitable alternative to the social values of Victorian England. The second issue of the rejuvenated *Hobby Horse* (April 1886) opens with a quartet of poems by Galton (his most significant poetic contribution to the magazine), entitled “Four Sonnets to Four Statues”: “To the Venus de Medici;” “To the Apollo Belvedere;” “To Pallas Athene;” and “To John of Bologna’s Mercury.” Within these poems, Galton illustrates the belief that late-Victorian society requires a more Hellenic view of art, if not indeed of life in general. In “To the Apollo Belvedere,” Galton exhorts the Classical deity who is “far from us; frozen into stone” to

Refit an arrow keen, and lay them low,  
Who venture to assume thine office; go  
Smite all pretenders to thy power bright,  
High “God of Poesy, and life, and light,”  
Reanimate thy form, and end our woe. (I, ii, 43.)

Such sentiments are restated in his sonnet “To the Century Guild,” likening the Guild’s artists to Spenser’s knights in *The Faery Queene* whom “Pretenders false they slew with righteous rage,” in the following issue for July 1886. In a footnote to “Apollo Belvedere,” Galton makes plain the fact that Matthew Arnold is the true, contemporary prophet of such an Hellenic resurgence, as he declares

Only one poet, in this un-Greek age,  
Can sing as thou would’st sing; can show us thee,  
With *all* the Muses moving in thy train.

Thou livest only in his classic page;  
He, only, teaches us thy light to see:  
Come, thou, and aid him to restore thy reign.

Hence, as he exhorted the Philistines to lose a little of their Hebraism in exchange for a more Hellenic approach to life in his seminal work, *Culture and Anarchy*, for Galton, Arnold stands alone as a figure of inspiration for an Hellenic revival in the nineteenth century. Once again parallels may be drawn between Pater’s Winckelmann and Galton’s Arnold in this respect, as both share this “Grecian Urn” quality of representing a living fragment of the Hellenic world within the modern. The fragmentary “Pallas Athene” echoes Keats’ Ode even more directly, as the statue of which “Only the fringes of thy robe remain” may yet inspire modern pilgrims “breathing still of Greece.” (I, ii, 44.) As with Apollo above, Athene is also petitioned to gather under the Guild’s banner, as Galton asks her to “show once more thy face, thy mind divine, / To us who look to thee for art’s release.”

A message of hope is delivered, suitably enough, by Mercury, as Galton develops the notion that the true spirit of Art is Greek. “To John of Bologna’s Mercury” laments

the fact that we inhabit “This world, from which all grace has well nigh flown,” and yet

[...] when thy form of light and grace we meet,  
It tells us that we are not left alone:  
Art is not dead; the Gods of Greece live still. (I, ii, 44.)

If (true) Art lives, then so must Greece, as, to Galton, the two are seemingly synonymous. As Pater declared Winckelmann “Greek” in a Classical sense,<sup>241</sup> though he be an eighteenth-century German, Galton sees the Hellenic spirit wherever true Art may be found – be that in a statue of a Classical god, or the poetic and philosophical works of Matthew Arnold.

The re-emergence of the *Venus de Medici* is used by Galton as a perfect metonym for the concept of “Renaissance,” as its physical presence encapsulates the transmission of “true” Art throughout various times past:

Venus, thou cam’st to men of other days,  
To bring them tidings of an earlier time  
For which they yearn’d: a bright and joyeous clime  
Where life was fair and free in all its ways.

And thou didst teach them goodly works to raise,  
Sculpture and painting and rich, golden rhyme  
Flourished again [...] (I, ii, 42).

The sculpture is Roman in its origin (first or second century), sculpted by the Greek Cleomenes, and is classically Greek in style, inspiring the artists of Renaissance Italy to rekindle the Hellenic flame, within the sphere of the arts. As with so many writers of the *fin de siècle*, the Renaissance signified hope for the young Galton who so struggled for the liberation of nineteenth-century art: if an Hellenic resurgence was

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<sup>241</sup> See his chapter “Winckelmann,” *WPR*, 141-185, especially 175, line 27.

possible once, then it must theoretically be possible a second time. However, it is from within this concept of “Renaissance,” as a fusing or confluence of times past, as encapsulated in the poem to Venus, that Galton begins to develop his own unique aesthetic-historic form of Catholicism in order to unite the Classical past with his own present.

The following issue of the *Hobby Horse* (July 1886) includes Galton’s article “Assisi: Aluid Ex Alio Clarascet,” in which the author depicts the medieval monastic leader in a light strongly reminiscent of the Oxonian model of the neo-Hellenic hero, opening as it does with a rhapsody to the *personality* of St. Francis the man. After citing the maxim that “To win mankind we must fascinate it [and] to fascinate we must be winning,” Galton enthuses: “That Saint Francis fascinated mankind there is no doubt, for in a very short time after its foundation his order had gathered followers from all the countries of Christendom.” (I, iii, 95.) As his eulogy continues, Galton praises Francis in terms typical of the Jowett-inspired, Paterian notion of the singular personality:

he was, in his lifetime, almost worshipped [...] not only because he had that ineffable charm of character and person which goes so far to take the world by storm; but because, with all his personal charm, he expressed, to the world of his own day, the ideas which touched his highest and deepest feeling.

Indeed, such was the personality of the man that, in Galton’s eyes, “Something of the fascination of Saint Francis lingers yet about Assisi, his spirit haunts it still.” (I, iii, 96.) Here Galton is expressing what becomes a recurrent theme in his writing, namely the notion of the past being encapsulated, or preserved within the present. As he kneels in veneration before “the Middle Age in its tender sentiment, its rapture, its intense reality,” so the physical Assisi, infused with Francis’ spirit, retains

the charm of this historical period: “while the art and associations of Assisi bring us back to the *sentiment* of the thirteenth century, the actual Assisi, as it is to-day, takes us back to the *setting* of the thirteenth century.” The houses are “like relics of a departed world” and Galton declares the streets themselves “self-asserting, picturesque, just what our common-place, conventional streets and houses are not.” (I, iii, 97.) The truly catholic, holistic nature of Francis’ spirituality is reflected in the Saint’s Church, “its shrines and chapels, as befits a genuinely catholic building, takes us to many lands and diverse times.” (I, iii, 98.) Indeed for Galton, the personality, and the art and architecture inspired by that personality, begin to become fused, as he declares that the Church itself stands as Saint Francis’ best form of “biography”: as the greatness of Classical Greece is preserved for us in the artworks which have survived, so Francis of Assisi’s life may be appreciated by experiencing the truly catholic art and architecture crafted in his honour.

The second half of the essay, however, changes focus to a great extent, as the recently post-Roman Galton appears to shy away from praising St. Francis as a *Catholic* hero in religious terms. Galton turns from the man to the thirteenth century itself, as an object of veneration. Recalling the reasons for his initial attraction to Catholicism (that “religions were valuable and venerable in proportion to their age”), Galton’s admiration for the thirteenth century rests largely upon its historical placing. The middle ages, Galton declares, “luckily for themselves, had only advanced half way towards the freezing artificiality of the eighteenth century, and the feverish self-satisfaction of the nineteenth;” and of these middle ages, he singles out the thirteenth century as the “culminating perfection.” (I, iii, 99.) What they were “advancing” from was the “supreme greatness” of Classical Greece: “True beauty, indestructible

and immortal, is the inheritance of Greece, to express it has been her gift; she is the chief, the most necessary classic" (I, iii, 106). Once more, Arnold is lifted high as the singular Victorian representative of the Hellenic Greats, "King of words" and Oxford's "*greatest golden-mouthed son*" (I, iii, 104; Galton's italics), followed by which, an attempt is made to draw the original topic of Assisi into this repeated praising of Greece:

part of our movement has only been to return, though what is called the Renaissance, some little way towards Athens; and again, through what is called Romanticism, some little way towards Assisi. (I, iii, 107.)

From this uncertain declaration, the article then descends into attempted racial theorising, as Galton states that "Not from Christianity [...] was Saint Francis' Naturalism," but from his "Celtic" blood. The twelfth century is declared a "Celtic Renaissance," with Dante cited as proof, and an impending second such "Renaissance" is heralded by Galton himself. (This notion of a Celtic Revival gathered considerable momentum within artistic circles of the late '80s and early '90s, and particularly amongst the network of poets centred around the Guild's headquarters at Fitzroy Street. Edgar Jepson recalls that the Rhymers' Club "were all very Celtic, for it was the days of the Celtic Fringe [...] they all declared that there was a Celtic Renaissance.")<sup>242</sup>

However, this essay on Assisi contains the seeds of two later essays that Galton submitted to the *Hobby Horse*, in which he solidifies his personal theory of the Renaissance and precisely what it represented. Turning from this attempted analysis

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<sup>242</sup> Jepson, *Memories* 237. For further information, see also chapter ten, "The Discovery of the Celt," Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Richards, 1922) 147-56.

of a man to the surer ground of examining religious and social history, Galton's two articles dealing with the Renaissance (II, v, 20 and V, xvii, 15) develop a much more coherent argument, and one in which a new, aestheticised form of Catholicism is central.

The article entitled "The Italian Renaissance" (II, v, 20) appears in the same issue as Selwyn Image's "On the Unity of Art," and indeed addresses some similar issues as Image's work, such as the opinion that painting need not "stand aloof [and] disdainful" of other forms of art. However, the central aspect of the work is a fundamental reappraisal of the term "Renaissance." Taking up the themes of John Addington Symonds' monumental work on the subject, *The Italian Renaissance* (1875-86), Galton proclaims that "Mr. Symonds' facts are undeniable." These facts are, according to Galton, the widely held reasons for the ending of the Italian Renaissance, which he encapsulates thus:

from the middle of the sixteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth, Italian thought was fettered; as far as the mental and political life of Europe is concerned, Italy was non-existent. The reason which Mr. Symonds assigns for this decadence is the true one: an ecclesiastical despotism destroyed the freedom, and therefore the creative genius, of Italy. (II, v, 20.)

Where Galton takes issue with Symonds, however, is in the semantics of his title to Symonds' latest episode: "*The Catholic Reaction*," he explains is "perhaps [...] verbally right, yet in reality a little superficial." In doing so, Galton seeks to differentiate between "post-Tridentine" Catholicism and the Medieval Church (recalling the elder Galton's views of the errors of his younger self). As with Image's writings on Catholicity, Galton states that "Compared to the narrowness of the Church after the Reformation, the Mediæval Church must be considered broad and tolerant." (II, v, 21.) Galton refers to this pre-Reformation Catholic Church as



being “Latin,” as opposed to the post-Tridentine, “Roman” Church, with the all-important difference being rooted in political structuring, rather than religious dogma:

We may call the Mediæval Church *Latin* [...] because the great Latin tradition, the theory of the Empire of Caesar, was the basis on which both the Nations and the Churches of Mediæval Europe were built up and organized. As long as the Mediæval polity was sound and healthy, *Rome* meant not only the supremacy of Peter, but the sway of Cæsar also. And this was true, in theory, long after the Sovereign Pontiffs had encroached on the Imperial rights. In other words, Rome was not merely the embodiment of ecclesiastical unity, it meant, too, the continuity of secular order and authority; and it was rather a federalising than a centralising influence. (II, v, 21-2.)

The effect of this argument is twofold. Firstly, it lays the blame for the demise of the Italian Renaissance at the foot of the Protestant Reformation, albeit indirectly: “the repression of Italy was caused, not by a return to Mediæval Latin Christianity, but by the evolution of our modern, or Roman, Catholicism.” More specifically, Galton states that the “violence of the so-called Reformers was undoubtedly the cause” of this shift in the position of the Catholic Church, a shift which “both narrowed the borders of the Church and embittered its policy.” (II, v, 22.) In addition to this, the second, and more important, issue postulated by Galton’s argument is the continuation of the *secular structure* of Imperial, Classical Rome within its transformation into the Holy Roman Empire. His final inference is that the word “Renaissance” is misapplied, as, until the blow dealt to Rome by the Reformation, the Classical world never actually disappeared.

This inference is reworked into a much more solid argument in his later work, somewhat pedantically, even sardonically, entitled “Some Thoughts About that ‘Movement,’ which it is the Present Fashion, to Describe Too Absolutely as ‘The Renaissance,’ and to Admire Inordinately” (V, xvii, 15). In what appears to be a

further example of Selwyn Image's influence over Galton, the latter opens his article with a reappraisal of the term "Renaissance" itself. Taking issue with *Webster's* entry for the word, Galton states that "it is founded, I imagine, upon that protestant and insular conception of the Renaissance, which is, at least, precise" (V, xvii, 15). This conception is explained as being the simplified, linear view of history in which the Roman Empire was followed by the Dark Ages, after which the Crusades disseminated Greek wisdom throughout Renaissance Europe until the new knowledge was eventually smothered by the Protestant Church. Galton rejects this established view of European history, as he further develops his own theory of a continuum of *secular* Romanism.

In his previous article, Galton opposed the idea of a gap in Roman influence from the onset of the "Dark Ages" until the dawning light of the Renaissance. In this essay, however, as well as building on his former thesis, Galton extends his view of a continual Roman presence in Europe *beyond* the Council of Trent. With his ever-keen eye for historical detail, Galton proclaims that "the Barbarian, who destroyed the Roman Empire, was not Attila but Napoleon" (V, xvii, 16). His reasoning for such a claim is that a great Empire can withstand, and even assimilate successive invasions;<sup>243</sup> and the key to the Roman Empire's survival was the physical structure (*not* the dogmatic beliefs) of the Catholic Church:

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<sup>243</sup> Such a theory finds echoes in British Imperialist literature, such as Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906).

the jurisprudence of the [Roman] Empire, its outward forms, and its traditions of order and civility, were all preserved against the barbarian attacks; thanks to the Roman Pontiffs, and to them alone, they were preserved: by Papal authority, through the organization of the Roman Church and the zeal of the Benedictine Order, they were communicated to the new masters of Europe; and, on all sides, we find mere pirates and foragers growing into ordered commonwealths; thanks to the Roman Pontiffs, and to them alone these inestimable gifts were communicated: the traditions and civility, which were thus preserved and thus communicated, and the political societies formed upon them, were gradually developed into that imposing confederation, which is known in history, as the Holy Roman Empire; the nations of mediæval Europe had a common centre of political unity, as they had a common bond of religious faith, in the Apostolic Throne.

Extending his previous argument of Classical Rome surviving as far as the Council of Trent, Galton now asserts that “Under this venerable and majestic reign of law, Europe was nourished, at least in theory, for longer than a thousand years” (V, xvii, 16-17). Galton breaks down any division between Church and State, as he paints the ancient religious leaders as political entities: Saint Leo, claimed as the founder of the Holy Roman Empire, established a system whereby “the cares and burdens of the degenerate, of the absent, or of the vanished Cæsars” were taken over by successive Popes. Galton’s concept of the Classical world is then stretched as far, indeed, as the nineteenth century itself, as he declares that “this political order, with no change in its essential traditions and with no breach in its external forms, endured, though in a lamentable decadence, until the abdication of Francis II, in eighteen-hundred-and-six.” (V, xvii, 17.) In doing so, he justifies his claim that it was, in fact, Napoleon who destroyed the Empire, and he illustrates the folly of such destruction with the political turmoil that beset Europe ever since that date.

Thus dispelling any concept of the “Dark Ages,” Galton offers up a view of European history which embodies a continual Roman presence, and he even proposes that “a more noble and a greater Gibbon” might pen the work “The Rise and Progress of the Holy Roman Empire.” The Roman Empire may well have been “sacked,” but according to Galton, it “was not destroyed; the supremacy in it was

merely transferred from the Romans to the Barbarians, and the conquered Latins began at once to try and civilize their masters.” (V, xvi, 18.) Galton-the-historian then ably illustrates his case with many details from European social and political history. The Goths “celebrated the public Games of Rome [...] repaired the aqueducts [and] distributed the old allowances of corn” (V, xvii, 19); citing both Gibbon and an anonymous French source, Galton illustrates how the “Gothic Kings, so injuriously accused of the ruin of antiquity, were anxious to preserve the monuments of the nation they had subdued.” The continuity of Classical Greek wisdom throughout the “Dark Ages” is illustrated in the fact that the Romano-Goth Boethius studied in Athens. Augustine is viewed as bringing Roman culture back to England, and even a direct Greek influence reaches her shores, as “Theodore of Tarsus,” Archbishop of Canterbury, was himself Greek and well versed “in Greek and Roman Literature.” (V, xvii, 22.)

Repeatedly, Galton lauds “Papal charity and Benedictine zeal” for preserving the Roman traditions, and, having done so, he declares that “The Roman Church, the larger cities in Gaul, and whole districts in south Italy, never lost the classical tradition” (V, xvii, 19). As he continues, the entirety of what might indeed be termed “Culture” in modern society is depicted as being handed down directly from Imperial Rome as Galton espouses his theory that “through the Roman Law, and the Roman Church, the classical tradition became the mother of literature and the arts; and thus, though modified by the Church, it created mediæval society, and was the basis upon which the whole civil order was founded and preserved.” (V, xvii, 19.) Galton later adds detail to this idea of artistic continuity, as he claims that “the art of the early Middle Age came directly from the [...] Lower Empires; there is no gulph between

them, in time; no difference, in style; they are conterminous, continuous, and similar.” (V, xvii, 22.) Jewellery, costume and architecture throughout the ages are shown to be one continuous, stylistic progression, as Galton asks, “who shall say, where the classical world ends, and where the mediæval world begins?” The unspoken continuation of this argument is then surely, who may say when the classical world ended at all?

Galton’s beliefs, radical changes notwithstanding, were obviously deeply held, as, unlike Image, he could not pose as a believer in a religion which he saw as being false. Yet having fled the Victorian Catholic Church on account of what might be called its heresy in 1880, by the mid 1880s and early 1890s, Galton still found some use for his discarded Roman robes. Influenced quite profoundly by his second university, Oxford, and the socio-artistic movement typified by the Century Guild, Galton began to reshape the concept of Catholicism, recasting it as a repository for the social structures and artistic influences of Classical Rome. As his ideas develop from the article on Assisi to the two later articles on the Renaissance, one may see how his early adoration for Pagan, rather than Catholic, Rome is entwined with his desire to depict the present as being the sum of all its pasts, rather than the successive ages forever distancing modernity from the ancients. As he illustrated in these two essays on the Renaissance, and especially in the poem to the Venus de Medici, the Roman world had inherited, if not assimilated, Classical Greece. Thanks to the continuity of the secular Roman tradition within Catholicism, Galton asks finally, “can any period be named, in which the classical traditions were not a living influence?” (V, xvii, 19.)

Much like Selwyn Image (and probably under his tutorship), Galton formulates a theoretical Catholicism, free from any specific religious dogma, which had caused so many problems for him in the past. As with Image, this remodelling of the Roman Church was defined largely by his own personality. Whereas Image may be seen as playfully posing in a priest's garb in order to defend his sensuous theory of art on religious grounds, Arthur Galton chooses an analytical, historical approach to depicting Catholicism as the friend of the artist.<sup>244</sup> As he implied in his article on Assisi, the past has not disappeared, and through the grace of the Catholic Church, "Art is not dead; the Gods of Greece live still." Thus in order to indulge his personal desires to see an Hellenic revival in England, with specific reference to the position of Art in England, Galton formulates a purely secular view of Roman Catholicism, Pontiffs and all, which is worthy of praise, even after his personal rejection of Catholicism as a religious faith. In essence, there is no need for a new Renaissance, indeed the medieval Renaissance is a misnomer, as the Hellenic world has been a continual presence in Europe, up until modernity. For Galton, through the continuity of Rome, Classical Greece is delivered to the very gates of the nineteenth century, providing sanctuary for the embattled Artist of the *fin de siècle*.

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<sup>244</sup> In doing so, the younger Galton's writings are clearly at odds with his older self, who saw Catholicism, and particularly the social and political extensions of Papal authority, as an unequivocal threat to England.

## 2.4 Herbert Horne: Cavalier and Connoisseur.

Herbert Percy Horne, more than any other member of the *Hobby Horse*'s central collective, remains an enigma. In all his writings, he maintains a studious silence as to his personal life, leading to speculation over the reason why. Ian Fletcher, in his scholarly "pre-biographical" work *Rediscovering Herbert Horne: Poet, Architect, Typographer, Art Historian* (1990), illustrates this taciturnity by examining the correspondence between Horne and Arnold Dolmetsch. These letters "reveal a sharp contrast of personalities" between the two, with Dolmetsch "trust[ing] Horne with many personal confidences, speaking with an engaging frankness," vividly expressing "Dolmetsch's fluctuating moods," whilst Horne's letters "betray little of the writer's emotions."<sup>245</sup> Although a contributor to the early *Oxford DNB*, Horne had no place there himself until recently.<sup>246</sup> The current biography details Horne's artistic development and his principal works and connections before declaring:

This was Horne by day. By night he could be found in the saloon bar of The Crown in Charing Cross Road, with Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, and Arthur Symons, Bohemian poets and *littérateurs*, or lecturing on art to the people of the East End, or escorting young dancers from the music-hall with Stewart Headlam and Selwyn Image.<sup>247</sup>

This "vampiric" dualism in Horne is a marked feature of many of the biographical fragments available, hinting at a secret life, with Crawford stating that this "Dark, reticent, worldly-looking [man] with pale skin and disturbingly red lips" was

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<sup>245</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 89.

<sup>246</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 2.

<sup>247</sup> Alan Crawford, "Horne, Herbert Percy (1864-1916)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 6<sup>th</sup> July. 2006  
< <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37570>>.

“perhaps bisexual.”<sup>248</sup> Although often depicted as “effeminate,” all references to Horne’s sexuality appear to spring from one, rather spurious source. As Fletcher notes, “It is only [Arthur] Symons who suggests any overt homosexuality in Horne,” that being in a singularly unstable and pejorative account of the man in Symons’ bizarre “A Study in Morbidity: Herbert Horne,” written sometime around 1924 and published in his *Memoirs* (edited by Karl Beckson, 1977). The whole, short piece defines Horne as “abnormal [...] a hard liver, a Sadist and a Pervert.” Symons himself declares that Horne was “fiendishly jealous, cold, cruel, calculating,”<sup>249</sup> but the task of initially declaring Horne to be homosexual is handed over to Selwyn Image.

However, this declaration is particularly untrustworthy and betrays more than a little cold calculation on the part of Symons himself. The article opens with a letter from Image, dated March 26<sup>th</sup> 1921, recollecting their days at the Alhambra and mentioning Symons’ forthcoming *Confessions* (1930). The narrative then shifts to a *recalled* conversation (dated by Symons as January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1924) where Image talks, rather uncharacteristically, of Horne as being “abnormally cruel” and suffering from mental illness.<sup>250</sup> Image apparently recounts Horne’s disappearance “for two years [...] to escape from charges of the worst kind against him” leading him to hide in Italy. This unsubstantiated and ill-defined claim is then given shape by the oft-

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Karl Beckson, ed., *The Memoirs of Arthur Symons: Life and Art in the 1890s*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1977) 127.

<sup>250</sup> This is in stark contrast to Ernest Rhys’ account of the “falling out” between Image and Horne. Believing Horne to have been under the “evil spell” of Oscar Wilde, Rhys states that “The worst Image ever allowed himself to say was, it was Horne’s want of loyalty that hurt him most.” Ernest Rhys, *Wales England Wed: An Autobiography* (London: Dent, 1940) 153.



quoted declaration that “I had no inkling of Horne’s homosexuality.”<sup>251</sup> These two statements appear to lend credence to one another. However, although taken as being the source for Horne’s alleged sexual deviancy, what Image is actually saying is that he personally had no reason to suspect homosexuality in the man, whom he had known, quite intimately, for a great many years. Although quoting from this article at length, Fletcher omits the sentence which follows Image’s surprise at the apparently established fact of Horne’s sexuality, namely: “You are probably right in *what you have said*.” (My italics.) Hence, despite his attempts to have Image voice the fact, the only specific claim to Horne being homosexual derives solely from Symons himself.<sup>252</sup>

It is possible that Horne was bisexual, yet this singular account is not reason enough to suspect so. Symons and Horne, although firm friends in the 1880s and early ‘90s, had fallen out, quite bitterly around 1895-6. The reason appears to have been Horne’s displeasure at Symons’ publication in *The Savoy* of a tale relating to a prostitute entitled “Pages from the Life of Lucy Newcome,” which was in fact a thinly veiled, fictionalised account of the life of Muriel Broadbent, Horne’s mistress.<sup>253</sup> Karl Beckson describes her as a prostitute who “plied her trade [...] on

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<sup>251</sup> Beckson, ed., *Symons: Memoirs* 126.

<sup>252</sup> Image’s diary held in the Bodleian ends in August 1919, and although Symons may well have met Image as late as 1924, there is one entry from 10 years earlier which shares some similarities with Symons’ tale. On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1914, Image writes, “Dined with Arthur Symons at Kettner’s. We hadn’t met for years – not since just before his serious illness, poor fellow. He wanted a chat over old times with me, especially old Alhambra times. He seemed really just the same as of old – only aged, thinner, with a beard – his always nervous manner exaggerated, and he speaks now so jerkily and rapidly as to be very difficult to understand.” Diary of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. d. 349, 130.

<sup>253</sup> The original, unpublished typescript is entitled “Pages from the Life of Muriel Broadbent,” and is currently held at Princeton. See Karl Beckson, *Arthur Symons: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 349, n. 59. Horne responded by penning a parodic account of a meeting with a prostitute, who recalled Symons having a “Little winkle of a thing! He couldn’t do nuffing wif it!” and suggesting that Edgar Jepson expand the short dialogue “which should not be unworthy of the higher magazines, such as the Yellow Book, or – the Savoy.” See Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 15.

the promenade of the Alhambra,” and notes Symons’ claim to John Quinn that she was one “whose favours I shared with her *amant de coeur*.”<sup>254</sup> Coupled with this, the two men’s once shared interests began to diverge significantly around 1895, as Horne gravitated towards art history and trading in fine art, whilst Symons became editor of *The Savoy*, a significantly less elitist publication than Horne’s final incarnation of *The Hobby Horse* (1893-4), and a magazine for which the increasingly snobbish Horne had nothing but contempt. When added to the fact of Symons’ own severe mental illness, which began in 1908, the after-effects leaving “his intellectual functioning [...] impaired,”<sup>255</sup> his later writings on the deceased Horne must be treated with some scepticism.

Symons’ unreliability in this matter notwithstanding, Horne was secretive to the point of paranoia. As Randall Davies, his literary executor, declared: “Two days before he died Herbert sent for me to give me several bundles of papers which he asked me to destroy without looking at;” this request being made after Horne had hurriedly written his will.<sup>256</sup> The incident may be read as indicative of a guilty past, but without Symons’ accusations, the exact nature of the papers remains pure speculation. Symons ends his account by citing *Dorian Gray*, with the implication being that Horne led a sordid and sexually deviant, secret life. However, as Wilde said of his own protagonist, and remains the case with any examination of Horne’s private affairs, “what Dorian Gray’s sins are no one knows.”<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Karl Beckson and John M. Munro, eds., *Arthur Symons: Selected Letters, 1880-1935* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) 102, n. 4.

<sup>255</sup> Karl Beckson, “Symons, Arthur William (1865-1945).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 6<sup>th</sup> July. 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36400>>.

<sup>256</sup> See Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 150.

<sup>257</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 438.

Ernest Rhys concurs that Horne was a “somewhat incomprehensible man,” but goes on to state that, unlike some of his peers, he had “nothing of the ne’er-do-well in his make-up.”<sup>258</sup> To Will Rothenstein, Horne was admirable for being a “secretive and economical collector” of fine art;<sup>259</sup> Ernest Dowson, upon first meeting Horne, declared that he “seems a man of merit” and later described him as “exceedingly charming and kind.”<sup>260</sup>

Not surprisingly, Horne’s secretive nature leaves little in the way of personal religious convictions or opinions in his written works. His poetry oscillates between sensuous love poems and rather effete, decoratively flamboyant, High Anglo-Catholic verses, though these themes may be considered “set piece” works for many who moved in the *Hobby Horse*’s circle. Indeed, his poetry on the whole bares a marked similarity, both in content and stylistically, with that of his former master, Selwyn Image.<sup>261</sup> Ian Fletcher notes that certain papers held in the Museo Horne, Florence, display “a rather sentimental Anglo-Catholicism and Pre-Raphaelitism” in his tastes, around the time of his first meeting Image and Mackmurdo.<sup>262</sup> In a letter to Edgar Jepson, Horne mentions the Catholic Church in relation to Symons; however, his tone is sarcastic and disdainful. Although not damning of the religion itself, Horne appears to criticise the reasons for so many conversions to Rome amongst the ’90s artistic fraternity, and Symons specifically:

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<sup>258</sup> Rhys, *Wales England Wed* 80.

<sup>259</sup> William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein: 1872-1900* (London: Faber, 1934) 239.

<sup>260</sup> Flower and Maas, eds., *The Letters of Ernest Dowson* 132 and 87.

<sup>261</sup> That Image was a poetic influence is beyond doubt. The young Horne “talked of Image with boyish idolatry” (Rhys, *Wales England Wed* 153) and Image and Horne dedicated their published volumes of poetry to one another.

<sup>262</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 3.

Symons is expected to arrive in Rome as soon as he is quit of his engagements with Smithers [...] What is not yet generally known is that he is expected to be received into the Church upon his arrival there; and so presently join one of the religious orders, that in the sickroom of the monastic life, he may devote the rest of his days in expiation of the horrid vices and enormities of his past life.<sup>263</sup>

Although an attack on Symons primarily, the statement could indeed be read as being dismissive of Catholicism itself, but once more, Horne's exact feelings on the matter remain veiled. However, where he does have cause to write with clarity regarding religion itself, and indeed with some passion, is on the subject that all would agree was closest to his heart – be he bisexual, heterosexual or of “low vitality,”<sup>264</sup> Herbert Horne's one abiding love was for Art. Very much akin to the writings of both Image and Galton, Horne plays with an aesthetico-historical Catholicism as being an ally to the Artist, but the faith's largest attraction for Horne would appear to be its opposition to Protestantism, their shared enemy.

Issue number 13 of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, January 1889, opens with a “Preface” written by Horne in his role as editor, in which he re-states the magazine's central ethos – the definition and defence of true Art. In doing so, Horne's work demonstrates how the “British Matron” letters of *The Times* in 1885 encapsulated many populist views regarding art and morality, which were still being debated some four years later. Recalling the imperialistic argument of “Another British Matron,” Horne begins his article by stating that “At any one moment in the life of a nation the need of morality may seem to be paramount; but a study of its continued history will show that it has other needs of equal importance” (IV, xiii, 1.) These needs are,

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<sup>263</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 14.

<sup>264</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 9.

according to the author, for “knowledge,” “manners” and “beauty.” The “greatest Art,” Horne continues, should be “sedulous [not] of our need for morality alone, but careful, also of our need for knowledge and manners.” Although not being a particularly succinct and clear theory of the position of art in society, what Horne is implying is a want of both knowledge and manners amongst those who view art from a moralistic standpoint in isolation.

In a statement in common with much of Horne’s earlier writings, he concludes his opening argument with the Paterian mantra that “For this end, therefore, Art must exist for its own sake,” and be divorced from such single-minded arguments as morality alone. Again, Pater’s *Renaissance* heroes are evoked when Horne asks, “how can a man learn to paint unless he has first learned to *live*?” (Horne’s italics, IV, xiii, 4.) Furthermore, he continues “It is of individuals, not of schools, that Art is in need,” and such individuals should be afforded “free expression to their individual thoughts and sentiments” (IV, xiii, 6). Thus Art, and indeed the artist, like Pater’s Leonardo, must exist in an *amoral* environment, free from any such social or political bias as the current obsession with an exclusive and proscriptive moral code.

Horne continues his attack on the Matron’s thesis in a development of an argument popular amongst his artistic circle, namely that Art should be entirely free from any form of commercialism.<sup>265</sup> He states quite clearly, “The moment [Art] is approached merely as a means of making a livelihood, and much more with any ambitious interests of a ‘commercial’ kind, it ceases to be Art.” (IV, xiii, 2.) He then

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<sup>265</sup> For example, see G. F. Watts’ article “The National Position of Art” (V, xvii, 2) where he too argues against commercialism in Art, and also points out that it is only through the artwork left by civilisations past that one may understand their culture.

counters Another British Matron's idea that the want of morality in paintings would lead directly to Imperial decline by quoting Blake's "Public Address":

It is not the arts that follow and attend upon empire, but empire that attends upon and follows the arts .... Commerce is so far from being beneficial to arts or to empires that it is destructive of both, as all their history shows .... Empires flourish till they become too commercial, and then they are scattered abroad to the four winds.<sup>266</sup>

Also, countering the Matron's idea that "the passion for the nude in art" to be found in "our neighbours across the Channel" would lead to ruin in England, Horne states that there is one school of Art in England (presumably the "New English Art Club") which is not blighted by commercialism, due to its being "influenced chiefly by the modes of Art and Literature prevalent at the present time in France."

Having thus countered many of the specifics of the Matrons' followers' arguments, Horne then moves on to his attack on the ethos underpinning Art's detractors – Protestantism. Horne illustrates what the proper attitude should be when considering any and all art, beginning specifically with his own principal field, architecture. In doing so, he outlines an holistic approach to all forms of art, the central tenet being a "catholic" view of creativity, rather similar to Selwyn Image's works "On Catholicity of Taste" and "The Unity of Art." What is required is "the discipline of regarding the disposition of a work as a whole, and relating, both as regards form and mass, every one part to every other part, mindful always of fitness, harmony, proportion and symmetry" (IV, xiii, 5). After citing Milton and Bach as examples of such artistic harmony, Horne states that this approach to art "is dominant in all Greek and Latin Art, in the work of the great age of the Italian Renaissance" and that "in

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<sup>266</sup> This quotation is taken from Blake's *Notebook*, see G. E. Bentley, ed., *William Blake's Writings*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978) 1037-8.

this connection lies the true unity of Art; and only under the influence of a unity of this kind, can the arts attain their perfection.” Akin to the works of Image and Galton, Horne identifies a necessity for an holistic approach to art, and the fact that the Hellenic world affords the best example of such a creed.

Once more echoing Galton and Image, this unity of purpose in Art is illustrated as being continuous and contiguous from ancient Greece to modernity:

In the successive histories of Greece, Rome, mediaeval Europe, and of more recent times, how differing Art has been both in regard to its ideals and temper, how various in its methods of thought and work, and yet one quality constantly recurs, the endeavour after *fine interest*.

Galton’s idea of a continuum of cultural influence is clearly manifest in this statement. Moreover, his view that the “Gods of Greece live still,” whenever true Art touches the soul, like the Paterian notion that an individual such as Arnold or Winckelmann may be designated “Greek,” so too for Horne, the “Greek” spirit of true Art may be found in all ages: “it embraces the art of Catullus, Dante, Leonardo, equally with that of Jan Steen, Watteau, or Robert Browning.” In illustrating his central thesis, therefore, Horne declares “It is neither practical, nor necessary, here to point out that this term of ‘fine interest’ is [...] catholic” (IV, xiii, 3-4).

Of course, the word here is taken to mean “all-encompassing” with regard to humanity. However, Catholicism, in as much as it is a “default other” to Protestantism, is lauded by Horne when he declares in his opening sally against the puritanical Matrons,

Had the sense, so widely prevalent in the reign of Charles I, of the necessity of beauty [...] withstood the overwhelming and sterile endeavour after a state of life wholly dependent upon morality; had this sense of the necessity of beauty survived, and had it permeated the people, it would have been impossible for the present deadly state of society to have come about. (IV, xiii, 1.)<sup>267</sup>

This “deadly state” is the popular attitude towards art typified by the letters in *The Times*, an attitude which the bulk of the rejuvenated *Hobby Horse*’s editorial and scholastic works vehemently oppose. By singling out Charles’ reign, Horne is seeking to draw attention to the root cause of this antagonistic approach to Art – the dominance of puritanical Protestantism in England. The character of Charles I, and the supposed ethos of his reign, reappear in much of Horne’s writing at the time. Horne sees Charles as occupying a similar position in English history as do the Medici Popes to that of Catholic Europe; the flamboyance of his reign was used by his puritanical detractors as an excuse for wide-ranging reforms affecting the whole of society.<sup>268</sup> The culmination of the reaction against the Medicis was the Protestant Reformation, just as the puritanical Parliamentarians deposed, and decapitated, Charles I, removing the decadent Monarchy. Very simply, Charles becomes a friend to the nineteenth-century artist on account of their sharing a common enemy, Puritanism; and just as the political reasoning for the English Civil War in time began to divide the country in terms of religious sectarianism, so Horne’s championing of the Artist develops into a battle between Catholicism and the puritanical Protestants.

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<sup>267</sup> The Cavalier cause itself is one much trumpeted amongst Horne’s artistic circle. Edgar Jepson, in wishing to lionise the actor Marmaduke Langdale declared him to be “a direct descendent of Charles the First’s cavalry leader during the Great Rebellion,” the implication being that even amongst the artists of the 1890s, Charles’ struggle against the puritans rages on. Jepson, *Memories* 219.

<sup>268</sup> Indeed, Oscar Wilde also singles out the fashions and modes of dress in Charles’ time for praise in his lecture on “House Decoration” in 1882. Oscar Wilde, *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Robert Ross, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1909) 163.



In his defence of Art, and indeed his attacks upon those whom he perceives as Art's enemies, Horne again draws on similar theories to both Image and Galton. However, he develops his argument further, over a succession of articles examining the nature of the Hellenic view of Art and life in specific relation to English art and history.

Naturally, Horne's view of English history is centred around great English architects. The annual *Hobby Horse* of 1889 (vol. IV) contains a trilogy of essays on the celebrated architect James Gibbs (1682-1754), contemporary of Sir Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor. The first of these essays is most notable for its central passage being a rhapsody to Rome – both pagan and Catholic. Once again, Horne stresses the idea of an unbroken artistic tradition stretching back into antiquity:

Rome, the imperishable mother of infinite tradition, not only in this art of architecture, but in the whole rule of life, at once most admirable and most deadly. Consider her practice in building, whose art is yet the art of the Dorians, refined and enriched by the after-genius of Greece. (IV, xiii, 35.)

Similar to Galton's theory of the Renaissance being part of a continuum, rather than an isolated resurgence, Horne depicts ancient Greece as the genesis for what became an unbroken artistic tradition: "The immemorial conception of the Greek order [...] seems to us at this present to have sprung up in the midst of a people, that looked behind to no forerunners." Horne sees "such priceless beginnings of [...] art" as being "elemental," springing directly from the pagan earth, "the patient mother of all things, a perfect creature, pure and without stain." This genius for art was then

absorbed by the austere, laborious Roman nature; and what in Greece might have proved changeable or transitory, grew fixed and eternal upon the Italian soil. Beneath the changing lights of Time, - the glamour of the imperial luxury, the morning light of the middle age, - their same tradition lived on to be re-inspired by the genius of the Renaissance [...] and like Rome herself continues yet, splendid, sensuous, pagan, and at the heart unalterable. (IV, xiii, 36.)

As preached by Image, the very soul of Art is its sensuousness, and akin to Galton's theorizing, the chain of human artistic tradition remains unbroken from Greece to modernity. What Horne sees in the Renaissance therefore, as was suggested in his earlier statements about the reign of Charles I, is a certain "spirit of the age," receptive to the influence of this artistic tradition. Both of these expressions of humanity were, for Horne, extinguished within England by the Protestant cause.

Horne then turns to Gibbs himself, as a way of uncovering the nature of this "spirit" in the individual, and the quintessential element of this receptiveness to the eternal spirit of Art is the

Catholicism of his [...] fathers [...] in which his childhood had been passed, and which seemed the more full of colour by reason of the hard, cold setting of Presbyterianism by which it was surrounded, had to him proved a true education, indeed bringing him forth out of the wilderness. (IV, xiii, 36.)

Horne thus depicts the two major forms of Christianity as being almost polarized in this respect. Catholicism offers the artist a setting of warmth and colour, as opposed to the "hard, cold [...] wilderness" of Protestantism. Horne continues, sketching the breadth of view to be found within Catholicism, before highlighting the Faith's ultimate goal:

By no straight and direct way, but through many opposite and conflicting interests she led him, deviously it might seem, but surely as it fell out. And were we to attempt to discover what in the art of Wren had been attractive to him, we might stumble upon the influences of Bernini, and so be brought once more to the gates of the Eternal City.

To Horne, it would have been impossible for Gibbs to have attained such a breadth of experience within the Protestant faith. True artistic expression finds much more fertile soil within the holistic approach to humanity found within the Catholic Church. More importantly, in an argument again reminiscent of Arthur Galton, by Roman Catholicism's very physical structure, eventually, all great Art leads to Rome, the immortal throne of the Greek-born god of Art.

In his final article on Gibbs, Horne restates the importance of catholicity allied with Catholicism in the artist, stressing Gibbs' tolerance for the views of others: not only was he "of the Catholic Church, he was, also, of a catholic spirit," continuing:

And so, as we ponder him, he himself passes from our scrutiny, and we are brought face to face with the idea, which dominated, not only his life, but his whole art. It is the idea, of which Rome is the outward and living symbol; the idea, which, in the figure of it would choose for the ore of human life, while hearing and endeavouring to admit all requests and opinions, prefers that which has the greater sanction. (IV, xv, 115-6.)

Gibbs' Catholic religion and his individual personality are therefore the two most crucial aspects influencing his art. Once more, Horne remaps the artistic tradition to which Gibbs belongs; a tradition which had

become through the genius of successive ages, perfected, authentic, irrefutable. He did not propose to himself, as would an architect to-day, to build in the Vitruvian, or Palladian manner; but sought to understand, and accommodate to the temper and necessities of his own age, those eternal and essential principles and practices of his art, which, immediately from the divine hands, were transmitted to him by the Greeks, enlarged by the resources of Rome, and confirmed by the Italian genius. (IV, xv, 116.)

Through this unbroken artistic tradition, and indeed cultural tradition, of Greece to Imperial Rome to Holy Roman Empire, Horne identifies the eternal spirit of true Art. Although he may not be so bold as to suggest that to be Catholic is to be Greek (in a

Paterian sense), what Horne has illustrated through his writing on Gibbs is that, should one desire to attain the artistic and personal perfection that is “Greek,” there is literally no better starting place, in terms of ethos and artistic tradition, than Roman Catholicism.

This direct praising of Catholicism is, however, only a minor element in Horne’s dealings with Christianity within the *Hobby Horse*. The largest recurrent theme in his critical and creative works is an open, and increasingly militant, attack upon Protestantism. In number IV of the *Hobby Horse*, 1886, Horne contributes an article on another of his English architectural heroes, Inigo Jones. In this work it is possible to discern the seeds of his later work on Gibbs, particularly in the Paterian/Oxonian notion of the singular personality. According to Horne, at the start of his career, Jones “had found Architecture extravagant with faults akin to the worst excesses of the Euphuists; he left it restrained by the most perfect culture the world could give him, and filled with his own enchanting soul.” (I, iv, 127.) Like Pater’s Leonardo, it is the spirit of the man that gives to his art such unique beauty, but the theory, or the structuring of the individual’s work is shaped by “the most perfect culture”: Greece. Illustrating this, Horne quotes George Chapman’s dedication to Jones in his *Musæus* of 1616, where Chapman proclaims to his brother artist “Ancient Poesy, and ancient Architecture [...] requiring to their excellence a like creating and proportionable rapture.” Of Jones’ own work, Chapman sees “your most ingenuous love to all Works in which the ancient Greek Souls have appeared to you.” Clearly, Horne is depicting Jones as a Hellenic hero, in the mould of Pater’s *Renaissance*.

Horne stresses Jones' individuality in opposition to contemporary cultural trends:

“architecture to him must ever be the effort of an individual, not the outcome of an age, and his art must therefore be eminently traditional or Classic.” (I, iv, 128.) In illustrating Jones' particular genius, Horne then rebukes modern architects, a repeated trope in much of his writing:

unlike the architects of recent times [...] he knew that locked inside the “hushed casket” of his soul was the magic secret of all architectural style, charm and distinction; not the charm that holds the passing hour of fashion, but that which enchants all time. (I, iv, 138.)

For Horne, Jones' style of architecture “set the seal of the times of Charles the First”

(I, ix, 135) – an era sensible of the “necessity of beauty,” as he wrote in his 1889

“Preface.” This image of artistic perfection is then shattered, with the Protestant

cause as the culprit. Horne recounts Cromwell's storming of Basing House, seat of

the Marquis of Winchester, a staunch ally of the King. The house was sacked and

plundered, with Cromwell's troops taking prisoner several men who “loved the Arts,

Faithorne was of their number, probably Hollar, and certainly Inigo Jones; while

Robinson the player was killed.” (I, iv, 136.) Following the killing of the King, the

very sky fell in on the artistic community of which Jones was such an esteemed

member. “The rest” writes Horne, “is a brief chronicle of sorrow and

disappointment:”

He had lived to see the statues on his portico of Old St. Paul's “despitefully thrown down and broken to pieces.” Not one of his great designs had he been allowed to carry out. Greenwich, Castle Ashby, Stoke Park, York House, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and above all the Palace of Whitehall remain mere fragments of what Jones had intended them. Designs for palaces, cathedrals, and noble houses he had elaborated in surprising numbers. Drawing after drawing he had pathetically marked “not taken.” Now no longer was there any hope of the realization of these his great schemes, but only “grief for the fatal calamity.” (I, iv, 136-7.)

Horne's message is stark and clear: Protestantism, and puritanism specifically, is a destroyer of Art. The Museo Horne holds a number of manuscripts, identified by Ian Fletcher as contractions from Blake, where he speaks of "puritanism, that would be destroyer of all art,"<sup>269</sup> and in this monograph on Inigo Jones, such a thesis is given considerable credence. Although not yet positing Catholicism as the home of the artist *per se*, as he later did with Gibbs, this article delves into the inter-sectarian origins of the dispute between the puritans and the artists, a dispute that was still raging at Horne's time of writing.

The following year, this attack on Protestantism gains momentum and a tangible degree of militancy. Horne contributed a critique of Joseph Knight's newly published *Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1887), a man who, along with Blake, was one of the principal heroes of the *Hobby Horse* fraternity. The article opens with a thunderous attack upon Knight, in particular his woeful mistake of classing Rossetti's work as "Protestant." Of "The Blessed Damozel," Knight remarks, "In Protestant literature, at least, it is a thing unheard of in a poem in a sense religious, to find no trace of biblical phraseology." (II, xii, 91.) Horne's response to this statement is a frenzied piece of sarcastic rhetoric, detailing the precise nature of Knight's blunder. Taking up the idea later used in the articles on Gibbs, Horne illustrates how the rich sensuousness of Rossetti's works could never belong to the literature of "hard, cold [...] wilderness" of Protestantism.

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<sup>269</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 4.

At the time, Horne had been researching Herrick, for his work *Hesperides: Poems by Robert Herrick* (also published 1887);<sup>270</sup> and he uses his own criticism of Herrick to attack Knight:

As I was turning over a short time since the thin leaves, with their heavy seventeenth-century type, of the *Hesperides* and thinking where in English art, till we come to the art of Rossetti, can we find a parallel to Herrick's surprising resource of pictorial detail, where but in Rossetti's pictures is such a profusion of sweet sights and scents as in this old poet, with his April, May, his June and July flowers, his lutes of amber, his harps and viols, his wealth of colour, from the vermilion that the Lady of the Nuptial Song trod upon, to the green silk cord with which the silver bow of the girl in "The Vision" was strung, mixt as they are, with the odour of spikenard, musk, amber, and those other smells sweet as the vestry of the oracles and "set about" his many dainty mistresses (II, vii, 91-2).

Horne thus depicts a dizzily sensuous and exotic atmosphere within the two poets' works; indeed, the effect is somewhat similar to such passages of exoticism in Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, or Huysmans' *A Rebours*. He continues, "as these and a hundred such idle thoughts crowded into my brain, I came upon a poem I seem previously not to have noticed, a poem that made me exclaim 'Here is "The Blessed Damozel" of Protestant literature!'" Having set up this heavily sarcastic foil, Horne then explodes with righteous indignation:

But pardon me, Herrick, that even for a moment should I have wronged you thus. How could you, most delightful of Pagans, have held any but the Catholic faith, the one inheritor of Paganism? Happily, moreover, it is against the nature of art for any true artist to lend a word, much less a poem, to a *protestant* cause. I should have said, "Here is 'The Blessed Damozel' of Catholic literature." (II, vii, 92.)

Finally turning to Rossetti himself, Horne paints him in the now familiar colours of the Oxonian, Hellenic ideal. Rossetti is a man given over to the study of "love," studying "Islamite doctrine" on the matter; Rossetti, to Horne, had an "enormous

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<sup>270</sup> Horne's brief "Editor's note" shows the book to be a product of the wider Century Guild network, as he thanks A. J. Hipkins "for kindly arranging one of Henry Lawes' songs for this edition" along with Selwyn Image "for a long series of suggestions of the very highest value with regard to the selection of the poems." Robert Herrick, *Hesperides: Poems by Robert Herrick*, ed. Herbert P. Horne. The Canterbury Poets (London: Scott, 1887) xxxviii.

personality” and, recalling Galton’s words on Assisi, “the fascination proper to one who is to lead other men, a power of friendship given to a few, and above all he had in abundance God’s chiefest gift, distinction.” (II, vii, 98.) Never could such a demigod, nor even one word from his pen, one stroke of his brush, be allied to the Protestant faith; but rather must he be placed firmly on Roman soil, at the right hand of the Pagan god of Art. As with the work on both Gibbs and Jones, Horne protests against *any* claim made by Protestantism to the world of Art. For Horne, Protestantism can *only* be a destroyer of art, and although Catholicism may be “the one inheritor of Paganism,” as implied by Image and firmly stated by Galton, for Horne, a much stronger chord is struck by the fact that in opposing Protestantism, Catholicism may become an ally to the artists in their fight against oppression; “my enemy’s enemy is my friend.”

The last of Horne’s works examined here display a fusion of the influences of Pater and Selwyn Image upon the author. “The Letters and Papers of Adam Legendre: Now First Published from a Manuscript, in the Possession of the Editor” (V, xix, 91 & Vi, xxii, 45) is reminiscent of Pater’s approach in his *Renaissance* and *Imaginary Portraits*, whereby he illuminates certain historical figures with the use of creative fiction. The entire framework of the piece is, however, borrowed directly from Image’s *Bundle of Letters* of 1888: the ostensible papers examined are fictional, written by Horne himself, who then distances his editorial self from the self-as-writer by using the rather suspicious-sounding pseudonym, Lyall Aubryson.<sup>271</sup> This supposed editor of the letters is then twice more removed from the content of the manuscripts, as we are told that he acquired them on a visit to Rutlandshire, and that

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<sup>271</sup> Over the two instalments, “Lyall” is also variously spelled with one or two final “l”s.



the papers appeared to be “a transcript of a series of seventeenth-century letters, extending over a period of some fifteen years [...] from 1629 to 1644.” Found with the papers was a note stating that they were “Copies of the letters I found among the old papers in the coffin-box, which lay up in the loft, before they re-roofed my father’s house. Jane Vezey.” (V, xix, 91.) The reason why a country girl should have copied out fragments of the letters (certain passages are left unfinished), rather than keep the originals, is not made clear, and the editor “doth protest too much” as to their authenticity, tracing the family names of Vezey and the supposed author, Legendre, with considerable rigour. Horne obviously wishes these letters to be taken as authentic, as they contain detailed “proof” of Protestantism’s death-dealing blow to an English Renaissance, as already posited in many of the works examined above.

The fragmentary nature of the text is then compounded, as Horne states that “owing to the nature of this magazine, and the limited space allotted to him” what is shown in the *Hobby Horse* is but “a selection from them, adding the gist of his research and inferences, as briefly as possible.” As with Image’s *Bundle of Letters*, therefore, these are presented as being expurgated (doubly so, in fact), as an indication that the readers might read “between the lines.” Image’s work is again evoked, when Adam Legendre, in telling a friend of his first meeting with an “Admirable Beauty,” exclaims, “I beseech you [...] look upon these as Private Lines made for no Eyes but yours” (V, xix, 96) – the phrase being almost identical to the one used by Image’s elder to his young protégé.

However, the precise content of the letters betrays the fact that they are Herbert Horne’s personal fantasy. The papers revisit the time of Charles I, and Legendre is

said to have studied at Oxford and London, before travelling to Italy. On his return to England, he meets Herrick (here Hearick), trains as an architect at the “Museum Minervae,” founded by Charles I himself, where Legendre studies under Inigo Jones.

The “letters” fall into two broad categories, namely letters to friends, describing the current artistic climate of both Italy and England, and letters to, or regarding, his betrothed “Admirable Beauty.” In the first category Horne depicts the birth of an Hellenic Renaissance in England. We learn that Legendre finds the Italian music of the early 1600s “new and altogether delightful,” (V, xix, 93) and that the studious Legendre “find[s] every Curious Eye to be set upon Italy, the Cynosure of all Art, Civility, and a Magnificent State.” (V, xix, 98.) Legendre indeed has his own eye thus set, as he explains, “I would have nothing of the Grecian Arts escape me” (V, xix, 99). To this end, he is enrolled into Charles’ Museum Minervae, which was founded to provide

such Qualities and Exercises, as were presently not practis’d in their Schools; to wit, the sciences of Architecture both Civil and Military, Painting, Carving, and Graving; not to omit Navigation, Riding the great horse, and other such Noble Exercises (V, xix, 100).

Clearly, the Museum’s *raison d’être* was the production of Renaissance Men, with the “science of Architecture” taking pride of place in their studies. Charles’ intention in founding the college is described as being born out of “his love for all Excellent Arts and Works,” and with the aim of “our Civil Advancement [has] labour’d to translate the Nursery of every rare and curious Art, from Italy to England.”

Legendre continues:

Such you have, in brief, the true Portrait of this Noble Graft, whereof the Ripe Fruits of Production you may shortly expect: to the end, that we may boast our *Raffaello* equally with Italy; when the world, which now journeys to Rome, shall the rather turn its steps toward London [...] This Apollo, I say, is come amongst us; and the Muses walk in our streets. Vale. (V, xix, 101.)

Quite simply, the Renaissance spirit had come to England under Charles, along with the very gods of Greece. In the second instalment of letters, the following year, “Aubryson” reasserts this idea, stating in his opening preface that

they appear to show how general an apprehension there was in England, at that time, of the Italian temper towards Art; and how frequent was the effort to realize that delicacy of manners, which is the proper accompaniment of such a regards to Beauty. (VI, xxii, 45.)<sup>272</sup>

In a manner similar to his insistence upon the veracity of the author and transcriber’s names, Horne may be seen to be “over-egging” his work in this aspect: a few pages later, he stresses the idea a third time, stating that

the allusion [...] to a Renaissance of the Art and Learning of Antiquity, to which Legendre thought to be, at that time, on the eve of accomplishment in England, is one which he has made elsewhere, and upon more than a single occasion. (VI, xxii, 49.)

By repetition, Horne is attempting to establish fact. The lectures of Inigo Jones, attended by Legendre, confirm this supposed Hellenic revival on England’s shores. In the first instalment, Jones is reported to state that the “Logick” of architecture “affords the only Solid and Sufficient Grounds for Judgement in the other Arts,” and that

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<sup>272</sup> The coupling of “Beauty” with “manners” here chimes with Horne’s “Preface” to the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* of 1889 (IV, xiii).

this Science of Architecture, being searched and examin'd, is in the truth the Foundation and Substruction of a Glorious Fabric; the several parts of which are compos'd of those various and liberal Arts, which Time has deliver'd to us, out of the Grecian Practice [...] And if any should seek a further reason, wherefore a judicious Understanding of Architecture is to be accounted among the necessary Exercises, and Qualities, of a Civil Education, let him consider of what Dignity, and of how lofty a Temper, was this Art among the ancient Greek Souls, as among the present learned Artificers of Italy (V, xix, 102-3).

After having studied under Jones, Legendre illustrates the dawn of the English Renaissance, as he tells a friend, "Phoebus [...] who for so many ages lookt only upon *Latium*, and the disperst Fields of the Greek Souls, has in these latter days truly regarded this Ultimate Britain; and now in the first vintage of the Land." (VI, xxii, 50.) Indeed, this appears to be true in a literal sense, as the climate of Italy is brought to Britain, illustrated by sculptor, "Mons. Lesuer," who, when working in England

delights to work under no other roof, than that which the Vault of Heaven may lend to him; and so continually be put in remembrance of that famous Workshop in Florence, where John of Bologne, his master, did perform his incomparable pieces. (VI, xxii, 47.)

This same Lesuer created "*Bustos* of the Grecian Poets and Philosophers, in brass gilt" to adorn the King's galleries, and amongst which, the King's musicians play, their enchanted music enabling

the souls of Orpheus and Amphion (like the Arabian Bird from out the ashes of his own Body) once more arisen; plucking the Ears of not a few of us, and drawing down from Heaven, what of Lydian, Phrygian, and Dorick Melody has hither been remov'd, heard not in Ages upon Earth. (VI, xxii, 47-8.)

Horne successfully depicts an Hellenic paradise, which appears to possess the ability to surpass even the Italian Renaissance, under the benign reign of King Charles. This idyllic situation is inevitably destroyed, as any who have read Horne's articles on the reign of Charles I, and the subsequent puritan rule of Cromwell, would

surmise. It is in the letters to Legendre's betrothed beauty that Horne hints at the coming destruction. In a letter dated as 17<sup>th</sup> December 1636, Legendre talks of "this Evil" and speaks of his lover's "pitiful Heart" as being "overwhelm'd by the Unexpected Trouble" (V, xix, 105). He continues, building the atmosphere of impending doom as "Sorrows such as these, of so black and violent a Front, are as Tempestuous Clouds, swollen to above the pitch, and not long able to contain their storm." In an enigmatic question to his lover, Legendre hints at the nature of the coming storm, as he asks her "Are there no words of your Protestant, that you do longer call to Remembrance? or have all our sweet Resolves prov'd but Vanity, and a Passing Breath. No, no, it has not so proved!" (V, xix, 105-6.)

Horne's preface, as Aubryson, to the second instalment prepares the reader for the destruction alluded to in the earlier letters, stating "But this golden age of English Art proved as short-lived as it was illustrious." He continues, "its charm and freshness [were] forever swept away by the ignorance and impiety of the succeeding times," that is to say, the puritans' rule after the abolition of the Monarchy (VI, xxii, 45). Within the letters themselves, Legendre recounts the personal tragedy of the death of his beloved, at the same time that the King staged a court masque, the "Salmacida Spolia," by Sir William Davenant, in which Legendre himself took part. He explains, "the allusion was this: that His Majesty [was] conscious of the pernicious Event of war," and the King hoped to win over his enemies with refined culture, rather than by force: "the Salmacid waters reduc'd those ancient Barbarians to a desire of the Greek civility," and according to "Legendre," Charles hoped that such civility might alter the minds of the equally barbarous Protestants (VI, xxii, 55-6). After the failure of the King's attempts to win over his foes, Legendre refers to

his own “Heresy,” and states that he lived out the rest of his days as “a cloister’d man, and of fewest words; too Saturnine even for my kindest Friend.” (VI, xxii, 59.)

Ian Fletcher has read “The Letters and Papers of Adam Legendre” as being metaphorical, and revealing much of Horne’s own psyche, and as an example of Horne’s own desires and prejudices, this is certainly the case. However, the death of the beloved is read by Fletcher as “relating to Horne’s farewell to the muse of poetry.”<sup>273</sup> Indeed, such a theory may be given credence by the fact that Legendre first mentions her after his meeting with “Hearick,” and the fact that, as Fletcher states, it was around the time of the publication of these “Letters” that Horne ceased writing poetry. However, it would appear that such an allegorical view of the beloved is not actually necessary – the message of the beloved’s death is revealed in the tale itself. This crucial moment of her death, so fleetingly mentioned in the text, is actually key to the entire story. Horne’s own beloved was true Art; and in Horne’s fantasy, he meets her at the dawning of the English Renaissance (“the Muses walk in our streets”), and she dies at the moment that her protector, King Charles I, loses his battle against the puritan’s revolution, and the spirit of English, Hellenic-inspired Art is destroyed.

Horne’s fantasy may thus be seen in a similar light to Pater’s *Renaissance* and *Imaginary Portraits*. The format of the “Letters” themselves, without Aubryson’s introductory matter, is strongly reminiscent of Pater’s “A Prince of Court Painters: Extracts From an Old French Journal” in *Imaginary Portraits*. Pater’s “Extracts” are epistolary in nature and their window on the artistic world of the Royal Court match

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<sup>273</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 87.

Horne's later work exactly.<sup>274</sup> Though Horne was able to illustrate his personal views on Puritanism as the ultimate destroyer of Art to a degree by the factual, historical analysis of the lives of Gibbs and Jones, the "Legendre Letters" enable him to show a "greater truth" through fiction. This technique is manifest in both Pater's *Portraits* and *The Renaissance*; as the greatest good is to be gleaned from Leonardo the man, not merely his works, this justifies flights of fancy in illustrating the various details of Da Vinci's boyhood. For Horne, the cause of Art opposing Protestantism is best served by a fictional account detailing how Hellenic Art would blossom when freed from the shackles of puritanism. Left alone, the ever-present Classical Spirit of Art that dwells within Catholic Rome will spring to life once more, given enlightened, catholic, singular personalities to tend her. Hence, like the historical Renaissance for Pater, the historical "truth" of Charles' reign and the Reformation itself are, for Horne, of secondary importance.

Thus the majority of Horne's writing focuses upon the evils of Protestantism, when considered in relation to the sensuous world of Art. Catholicism is then preferable, as representing an opposing force to Protestantism. Moreover, as shown in the articles on Gibbs, and echoing much of Arthur Galton's theorizing, Catholicism, by its very geographical central location, embodies a living conduit to the Classical world, and its holistic acceptance of all human expression, artistic and otherwise, makes it the ideal home for the artist. The alliance between the Cavaliers and Catholicism, at the turning-point of English religious history, provided Horne with an ideal historical location for depicting his concept of the fundamental differences between the two Christian faiths as they relate to art. For Horne the aesthete, the

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<sup>274</sup> See Walter Pater, *Imaginary Portraits*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1901) 3-44.

opulence of Charles' reign becomes a parallel to the aesthetic-decadent movement of the 1880s and '90s. Moreover, both Charles and the artists of the *fin de siècle* were fighting a common enemy, and by "exposing" this initial crime against Art, Horne attacks English puritanism at its very root. Horne's criticism and fiction represent his personal battles in this tri-centennial war, and Charles's cause becomes propaganda in the fight against the puritans of the late nineteenth century.



## 2.5 Catholicism, Hellenism and the Nouveau Renaissance.

Although portraying Catholicism as a friend and ally to the artist, the three *Hobby Horse* writers here examined remain almost silent on the matter of actual Catholic dogma, or Catholicism as a personal religious experience. The Catholicism lauded in the *Hobby Horse* is a singularly aesthetic creed. For Selwyn Image it remains purely theoretical, existing almost solely within the realms of art criticism, as a different mode of perceiving the relationship between Art and Christianity itself. Catholicism is therefore a critical tool with which Image is able, to a certain extent, to reconcile the two driving passions in his life – Art and the Church. However, the religion itself seems to have never truly touched Image on a personal level, and many of his articles dealing with Catholicism, as indeed with his works hinting at a homosexual subtext, give the reader the distinct impression that the writer is posing as “the other” – be it religious or sexual – as a means of defying conventions. The extent and ferocity of the “No Popery” movements in the later decades of Victorian Britain, as illustrated by Hanson, amply illustrates the subversive power of Image taking such a stance. Any advocate of Catholicism during the late-Victorian era would be seen as being socially subversive in the eyes of the Protestant majority, and particularly the puritanical strain who were opposing the use of the nude in art and seeking the closure of the Music Halls in the 1880s and ’90s.

Arthur Galton, on the other hand, had initially arrived at Catholicism as a personal faith, but by the time of his writing in the *Hobby Horse*, any such religious beliefs had been almost wholly eradicated. Once again, Catholicism is used to attempt to bring together disparate aspects of the writer’s personality; in this case, his life in the

late nineteenth century and his desire to live in an idealised Hellenic age, as espoused by his literary hero and personal friend, Matthew Arnold. As his articles demonstrate, Galton develops his argument of a cultural continuum from Ancient Greece up until the very nineteenth century itself, as his focus moves from the examination of an individual such as St. Francis, to a detailed examination of political and cultural history. It is particularly interesting to note how Galton's original argument only takes the influence of Pagan Rome as far as the Council of Trent, but his desire to bring Paganism closer to home causes him to rework his theory of history, bringing Pagan-structured Rome into his own century. Catholicism therefore becomes a cultural repository for the Classical world, preserving the ancient order into modernity.

Herbert Horne's work may be seen as something of a fusion of both Image and Galton's approaches. The artistic tradition from the Hellenic world, through Imperial and Holy Rome up until modernity, is allied to the Paterian notion of the true spirit of Art being Greek, a common theme in much of the writing in the magazine, with both aspects being marked features of Galton's writing on Catholicism. As with Galton, Horne uses an idealised, almost *a*-religious, Catholicism (in his case rooted in the flamboyant reign of Charles the First) in order to live out his personal fantasies regarding the resurgence of the Hellenic in Art at the time of the Renaissance. He borrows from Image the ideas that Catholicism not only embodies the sensuous world of Art, but actively encourages it to flourish, and the more antagonistic premise of Catholicism as an opposing force to puritanical Protestantism. Horne's writings in this later category display a much harder edge, even perhaps a thinly veiled viciousness, in his counter attack on the puritans'

invasion of the artistic world, as typified by the followers of Horsley and Mrs Ormiston Chant; again, perhaps displaying something of the writer's psyche, namely the "coldness" identified by Edgar Jepson and Ernest Rhys as being part of his personality, if not the outright brutality of Symons' later rantings.

The idea of Catholicism encompassing a more diverse sexuality than puritanism's chaste ideal, as expressed throughout Hanson's *Decadence and Catholicism*, may also have some bearing on the attractions of the creed to the above writers.<sup>275</sup> It is also worth noting that in his illustration of the narrowness of view of the Protestant faith in "On the Representation of the Nude," Image uses Christian teaching on sexuality to make his point:

The moral teaching of Christianity sets before men as the highest life an absolute purity: and when through the necessities of the case some relaxation of this rigour there must be, the only relaxation allowed is marriage with one woman. Absolute purity, marriage with one woman: all else, even the imagination of all else, is deadly sin. (I, i, 10.)

In his "Letter to the Editor" explaining his meaning, Image insists that modern Christianity should not be perceived as resting solely upon the New Testament, but on things "wholly pagan as well" (I, ii, 80). Hence this "ascetic ideal," drawn from the Gospels and the writings of St. Paul, should not represent the whole of Christianity's approach to sexuality. For Image, the pagan notions of human sexuality should be equally valid. The pagan tradition, incorporating "Greek love" as it does, is, according to Image, Galton and Horne, to be found within the broad Church that is Catholicism. All three writers remain somewhat sexually ambiguous,

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<sup>275</sup> Indeed, Hanson's illustration of the catholicity of Rome notes the Church's ability to embody seemingly opposing views on sexuality. He states that "The Roman Catholic Church may well be the world's most homophobic institution, but it also may well be the world's largest employer of lesbians and gay men." Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* 26.

with Image's relationship with Arthur Burgess perhaps indicating bisexuality in the younger man. Certainly within his "Bundle of Letters" Image may be accused of "posing as a sodomite," as the Marquis of Queensbury may have put it (his spelling notwithstanding), and the fact that he only married very late in life is suggestive of a "deferral" of conventional sexuality, for whatever reason. Galton and Horne never married, and all three writers died childless. Herbert Horne certainly led a secret life, though so secretively in fact, that any explanation remains wholly speculative.

It would seem, however, that Catholicism had very little to do with the writers' private lives, with none of them ultimately turning to Rome, as did colleagues such as Lionel Johnson, on account of it offering an unquestioning acceptance of unconventional sexualities. Yet it is within Image's precise examination of the New Testament's, and therefore, by implication, Protestantism's, view of sexuality cited above, that we arrive at the very heart of any doctrinal aspect to the *Hobby Horse's* interest in Catholicism. Image is examining and interpreting the scriptures himself – this very process being a fundamental and inalienable right of every Protestant. The advent of the vernacular Bible in the fifteenth century played a major role in the Protestant cause, offering any reader personal access to the Scriptures, rather than through an intermediary, such as a priest. Protestantism is, in essence, therefore, rooted in the very act of examining Scripture. As Arthur Galton points out, however, in Catholicism this is not the case. In his review of "George Buchanan; Humanist, and Reformer: A Biography: By Mr. P. Hume Brown" he states that

an Age of Reformation is an Age of Violence, and violence is never the monopoly of either side: if the Protestants were too zealous, and too pedantic, in re-constructing a "primitive christianity;" the Catholics were often just as much to blame, in their fierce opposition to the Scriptures. (V, xx, 137.)

Galton continues, quoting Thomas Howard, the third Duke of Norfolk, “a leader of the re-action in the council of Henry VIII” who said, “It was merry in England afore the new learning came up; yea, I never read the Scripture, nor never will.” Buchanan records the fact that certain Catholic monks “believed, that Luther was the author of the New Testament.”<sup>276</sup> Such non-reliance upon the Scriptures in the medieval world was mirrored in Galton’s own training as a Priest. In *Rome and Romanizing*, he laments the fact that the “course of scripture” taught at his seminary “was far below the level of the middle forms in a public school.”<sup>277</sup> In *Our Attitude Towards Roman Catholics*, he elaborates further, stating that Roman Catholicism, as a creed, “relies upon authority, and defies truth,” with the “truth” being that gleaned from the Scriptures, to the reconverted Protestant Galton.<sup>278</sup>

Hence whereas Protestantism is defined by its doctrine derived from the Scriptures, and in particular the ascetic creeds of Christ and especially St. Paul, Catholicism has its ultimate foundation in its authority and tradition. Papal authority, as Galton himself earlier stated, is but a mutated form of the rule of the Caesars, and the Papal throne lies at the heart of “Rome, the imperishable mother of infinite tradition,” to quote Herbert Horne, “whose art is yet the art of the Dorians, refined and enriched by the after-genius of Greece.” (IV, xiii, 35.)

Certainly, other writers in the *Hobby Horse* discovered within Catholicism a sincere faith, offering respite from the troubles of the modern age. Ernest Dowson’s

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<sup>276</sup> Michael Wheeler confirms these anti-scriptural sentiments within early post-Reformation Catholicism, stating that during the 1569 Catholic “Rising of the North [...] Thomas Percy and his followers celebrated Mass and burned copies of the Bible and the official Protestant prayer book.” Wheeler, *The Old Enemies* xii.

<sup>277</sup> Galton, *Rome and Romanizing* 36.

<sup>278</sup> Galton, *English Roman Catholics* 69.

“Benedictio Domini” (NS, iii, 82) displays, with touching simplicity and honesty, the solace to be found within the sure ground of Catholic tradition. However, for Image, Galton and Horne, who may be considered the intellectual driving force behind the magazine as a whole,<sup>279</sup> Catholicism acted as a facilitator in the achievement of their ultimate goal – the salvation of Art from the hands of the Philistines, in the form of a New English Renaissance.

Matthew Arnold, although never deigning to propose Catholicism as a preferred theology, is an obvious source of much inspiration in the *Hobby Horse*’s general ethos, pitting the “Hellenic” against the “Hebraic” thought of the Protestant Philistines, in his seminal *Culture and Anarchy*. These opposing forces within the book may also be expressed in terms of the utilitarian approach to life, as opposed to individualism. Arnold’s concept of the educated, Hellenic individual is also central to the magazine’s theory of a coming Renaissance. If Catholicism afforded a suitable *setting* for a resurgence of the Hellenic, then the cult of the personality provided the *method* by which it was to be brought about. Arnold’s argument rests upon the idea that it is personalities that change society, as indeed did the philosophy of much teaching in Oxford under the influence of Benjamin Jowett. Linda Dowling illustrates the extraordinary level of belief in such a theory in her interpretation of Wilde’s infamous self-defence at his trial. In her explanation of exactly how and why a man guilty of the charges levelled against him might conceive of a legal triumph, she describes the “battle of discourse” between Wilde and his accusers, proposing the notion that Wilde foresaw victory due to the sheer force of his

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<sup>279</sup> Lorraine Hunt’s useful index to the magazine shows at a glance the fact that Image, Galton and Horne were the most frequent contributors of essays by far, over the *Hobby Horse*’s principal seven volumes from 1886-92. See appendix D, Hunt, “Century Guild Hobby Horse.”

personality and his ability to manipulate semantics and redefine his actions according to his own philosophy.<sup>280</sup> Through a specific analysis of Gothic traits in Pater's philosophy, Patrick O'Malley's work *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* strikes at the very heart of the issue: the power of "*The Renaissance* lies not in its explicit alignment of deviances but in its [...] suggestion that anything might be possible."<sup>281</sup> Wilde's performance during his trials is suitable testament to O'Malley's observation.

Wilde believed that he might facilitate a change in the legal system as he supposed that individuals educated in the philosophies of ancient Greece could indeed bring about a fundamental change in society. It is this same level of belief that inspired the writers in the *Hobby Horse* to prophecy a coming Renaissance. Their proof that such a system could indeed work had been given to them by one of their own, Walter Pater, as he re-examined the Renaissance, viewed through the philosophies taught during his time at Oxford under Jowett. Hence *The Renaissance* proposes that the societal and artistic developments of the Middle Ages were brought about by a number of exceptional personalities who were open to the influence of Greek thought – Leonardo, Botticelli, Michelangelo and so forth. His inclusion of Winckelmann amongst their number proved his point that the idea of a renaissance of the Hellenic was not tied to any historical period in particular, but to the individuals concerned.

Herbert Horne reasserts this idea in his articles on James Gibbs, referring to the historical Renaissance age as being exceptional only in its having a particular "spirit"

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<sup>280</sup> Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* 1-2.

<sup>281</sup> O' Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* 171.

that was receptive to Hellenic influence. This spirit is obviously brought about by individuals, with his central personality facilitating such an Hellenic resurgence in England being Charles the First, though Gibbs himself and Inigo Jones are also esteemed members of the movement. Similarly, Galton sees the “fascinating” personality of St. Francis as being the cornerstone to his own curious theory of a Celtic Renaissance. However, these historical figures represent only the foundations for the *Hobby Horse*’s premise; the bulk of exceptional personalities examined therein belong to the nineteenth century itself.

As examined in earlier chapters, such inspirational personalities abound amongst the writers for the *Hobby Horse*, their extended circle of acquaintances and their artistic and personal influences. For Galton, Matthew Arnold is a virtual Greek god, trailing the very essence of the Hellenic world about him as he walks through the Victorian age. Both Frederick Shields and Herbert Horne depict Dante Gabriel Rossetti as another such deity, with Shields literally worshipping him and Horne displaying the pagan credentials of his magnificent art and “enormous personality.” Horne’s “Preface” of 1889 draws a connecting “Greek” thread through art and poetry from Catullus to Robert Browning. Image’s lyrical eulogy to Arthur Burgess, as stated before, paints the personality of the artist as being his essential genius, rather than his ability to create art. In turn, the personality of Image himself is described as having significant “influence” by Edgar Jepson, for whom “Image was the most charming man I ever met.” In many ways similar to Galton’s praise for the supremely civilizing effect of Matthew Arnold, Jepson states that “our urbanity was greatly



owing to [Image's] influence."<sup>282</sup> Lawrence Binyon's recollections of Selwyn Image for his Memorial Exhibition also chime with Jepson's view of the magnificent personality of the man, who for Binyon was the best "talker," and whose "special charm" communicated "the quick and cordial enjoyment of life."<sup>283</sup>

The idea of an actual renaissance of the Hellenic way of life within the *Hobby Horse's* community gathers momentum in Herbert Horne's "Notes on the National Gallery" (I, ii, 69). In examining the School of Taddeo Gaddi, Horne is led once more to reflect upon the Greek influence upon Art. Again, Horne draws a direct link from Pheidias to Rossetti, illustrating "the Genius of Art," but, as with several articles around that time, Horne singles out the new reredos at St. Paul's as a supreme example of bad, modern art. In one of his more inflammatory outbursts, Horne describes how the work was undertaken "by men who have never matriculated in any one of the arts, and stand in a similar relation to sculptors as Welsh builders do to architects!!!" (I, ii, 73).

In opposition to this woeful state of affairs, Horne outlines the Greek theory of the artistic guilds:

the experience and genius of each art guild was brought into service, that the beauty of public buildings might in no respect fall short of the completeness possible to the times [...] By such co-operation of artists one does all that is possible to gain the best experience and skill, while to do less than this when any public building is to be erected is to fail in the first step of so important an undertaking. (I, ii, 72-3.)

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<sup>282</sup> Jepson, *Memories* 210-11.

<sup>283</sup> Tickner, "Selwyn Image," 1-2.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, though with extreme significance, Horne is then led to reflect on the Century Guild itself:

We may here note that to secure this co-operation of sculptors, painters, and metal workers in architectural work this Century Guild of Artists was formed, since it is still found that for such thoroughness of architectural work this co-operation is imperative. (I, ii, 73, n.)

Hence Mackmurdo, Image and Horne, in instituting the Century Guild in the early 1880s, were attempting to rebuild the Hellenic system for designing and erecting public architecture in the Victorian age. Nor were they alone; Ian Fletcher has noted that under the “Morris-influence programme,” such guilds flourished in the 1880s,<sup>284</sup> The Century Guild represented part of an active movement towards re-vivifying the Greek approach to Art, and as G. Lowes Dickinson has stated, “In approaching the subject of the Art of the Greeks we come to what, more plausibly than any other, may be regarded as the central point of their scheme of life.”<sup>285</sup> If this central pillar of Hellenism could be established, then from its solid foundation would emerge a full Hellenic revival.

Returning to Image’s article “On the Unity of Art,” such a theory of a dawning renaissance, instigated by a movement amongst artists, is indeed evident. After recounting the Chelsea meeting where “sixty or seventy men [...] came together” in order to redraw the popular idea of “art” so that it encompassed far more than merely picture-painting, Image states that

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<sup>284</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 180. Peter Stansky also affirms that the Century Guild was itself “the earliest of the Arts and Crafts groups” inspired by Ruskin and Morris. See Stansky, *Redesigning the World* 70.

<sup>285</sup> G. Lowes Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life*, pref. E. M. Forster, 23rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1960) 206.

There are many of us, who may smile at these revolutionists, or pass them over contemptuously: but the future lies not with us who smile and are content, perhaps; the future may lie with them. Not easily do old prejudices die, nor the scales fall off men's eyes [...] And who knows but that it may be in a near future, in a day of rejuvenescence and salubrity already beginning to break, when as little shall one think of leaving the business-manufacturer to look after our decorations in Tottenham Court Road, as we think now of leaving him to look after the charming pictures of our Academicians? (II, v, 8.)

What Image is detailing is precisely the same Hellenic approach to artists' guilds as that proposed by Horne, three issues earlier. His choice of the word "rejuvenescence" over "renaissance" is highly significant, as it implies that what is needed for such a renaissance is already present. What is more, this rejuvenescence is "already beginning to break." Such a "spirit of the age," a keenness to "do the right thing" in terms of Art, underpinned by a knowledge of the Greek traditions in Art – facilitated by both an education at Oxford and an awareness of the artistic traditions of the Church of Rome – surely heralded the dawn of the New English Renaissance. All that was necessary was for the enlightened individuals to perceive it thus. As the scales fell from both Horne and Galton's eyes regarding the supposed disappearance of the Classical traditions in Art and Culture, and their apparent survival within Catholicism, so the "Greek" world is to be seen all around, for those who have eyes to see:

Had you but eyes, but eyes that move  
Within the light and realm of love,  
Then would you on the sudden meet  
A Helen walking down the street.

Here in this London 'mid the stir  
The traffic and the burdened air,  
Had you but eyes that knew their home,  
Then this were Greece, or that were Rome.

(Herbert Horne, "Verses Suggested by Ovid's Lines," II, v, 37)

Once more, Image responds to the ideas of his young protégé, referring one year later, in a tale entitled “In the Days of the Philistines,” to “some charming verses” that a “friend of mine” had recently finished,

and their moral, certainly, was not less excellent than their rhythm. Why should we lament Greek Helen, they said, and those wonderful loves of Horace and Catullus? If only we had eyes to see, and will keep them open, in London we shall meet with ladies as beautiful as they were, and our experiences may prove as romantic as ever the most poetical spirit can wish. (III, x, 64)

Image then recounts the romantic tale of the artist Lawrence Burton and his beloved Ethel Calderon. Miss Calderon’s profile mirrors that of “Hera or Athene on ancient coins;” her “slightly aquiline nose reminded you [...] of a Florentine relief of the Renaissance.” Consequently, Image tells us, “Donatello would have seized such a model at once.” (III, x, 65.) Image weaves a tale of near Ovidian tragedy from an apparent hiatus in the relationship due to her illness, but the most fascinating aspect of the item is his active re-drawing of modernity in terms of the Hellenic. Horne, Image, and indeed many contributors to the *Hobby Horse*, were positively *enacting* a Renaissance in the 1880s. When viewed in such a light, Horne’s “Adam Legendre” papers appear very similar to Galton’s poetic interpretation of the Venus de Medici (I, ii, 42). As the ancient statue of Venus “cam’st to men of older days, / To bring them tidings of an earlier time / For which they yearn’d,” so too Horne’s fictional letters fulfil the same role as an inspiration from the past. In fact, given Horne’s detailed account of architectural lectures given by Inigo Jones, Galton’s words, “And thou didst teach them goodly works to raise” display a literal exactness in intent.

Thus with suitably enlightened artists, the Nouveau Renaissance was perceived as being underway. The argument against the Hellenic influence on modern life was

most clearly summed up by Mrs. Oliphant, in her review of Pater's *Renaissance*. Her argument rested upon the belief that the revival of Greek philosophy was detrimental to Oxford, as it had been "taken up a thousand years or so too late, on the top of a long heritage of other thoughts and conditions."<sup>286</sup> The *Hobby Horse*'s remapping of cultural history within Catholicism conveniently sidesteps this linear view of successive, dislocated periods of time. This idea of a pagan continuum of culture within secular Rome had the inevitable consequence of needing to re-draw the idea of a "renaissance," if the culture being rejuvenated has supposedly never disappeared. Hence, as Pater and his followers theorised, what was needed were enlightened beings, or singular personalities, who could "water the seeds" of Hellenism, and as Image, Horne and Galton proposed, such seeds were permanently preserved within the artistic, cultural and social traditions of the Catholic Church. Of course, the fact that the recently emancipated Catholic faith stood in flagrant opposition the Protestant faith, among whose strictest adherents the perceived "enemies of Art" were to be found, only served to make Catholicism even more appealing.

However, the Renaissance never quite came to fruition. Though remembered as a period of artistic flamboyancy, in the form of English Aestheticism and the development of Art Nouveau, the late Victorian age was also the harbinger of the twentieth-century's commercialism – the very destroyer of Art, according to Blake, as quoted by Horne. (Though the later Art Deco movement came some way towards bridging this seemingly infinite gap between Art and Commerce, such theorising belongs to works other than this.)

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<sup>286</sup> Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 90.

Yet, as can be seen quite plainly in the articles in the *Hobby Horse*, this renaissance was ever a theoretical affair. All the writers were re-drawing, re-mapping previous ideas. The cult of the personality opened the doors to a reinterpretation of ideas such as history or religion, allowing the development of theories that would facilitate the enlightened to look at the world around them in a different way. For this reason, Wilde's conviction could be seen as the death of such beliefs within Hellenised art and philosophy, or rather, the death of the right to reinterpret life as one wished. Wilde's final, unanswered question to his accusers makes plain the problem: "And I [...] May I say nothing, my Lord?"<sup>287</sup> Wilde was barred from defining himself and his actions; the right to interpret oneself and one's way of life had been very publicly removed. As Linda Dowling postulated, Wilde's trials were a "battle of discourses," and ultimately Wilde's discourse was silenced. Obviously, the direct consequences of the trials fell upon Wilde himself, rather than artists *per se*. But the calls in the popular press for the death of Decadence, and Selwyn Image's personal involvement with Wilde's plight amply display how the verdict sent shock waves throughout the artistic community of the *fin de siècle* in general, and the dispersed collective of the, now deceased, *Hobby Horse* in particular.

Ultimately, what is left for posterity by the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* is a recording of a moment in time. The issues discussed over its ten-year life track the birth of an artistic "idea," an idea very much defined by what it was opposing, but, although beset on all sides by enemies of Art, the magazine captures a certain optimism, a testament to Humanity (in all senses of the word) that is still quite

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<sup>287</sup> Hyde, *Famous Trials: Seventh Series: Oscar Wilde* 273.

persuasive to modern readers. Although Wilde's destruction by the legal system marked a solid victory for conservatism and a severe blow to libertinism and decadent Art, it did not *kill* the spirit of artistic optimism and libertine thought developed in the *Hobby Horse* completely. The 1890s saw a flourishing of Little Magazines, many of which owe a great deal to the Century Guild's admirable publication. The following chapters shall explore the legacy of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, as it may be found in such publications as *The Dial*, *The New Series Hobby Horse*, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*.

3. The Legacy of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*.



### 3.1 The Art Nouveau Magazine and *The Dial*.

In positing the *Hobby Horse* as evidence of social tensions and trends, this study has necessitated the examination of what are the largely overlooked works by Image, Galton and Horne rather than the Century Guild's other founding father, Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo. In many ways, his vision of the *Hobby Horse* differed greatly from those of his colleagues above. His leading role in the original *Century Guild Hobby Horse* in April 1884 was taken over by his younger partner, Herbert Horne, for the 1886 re-launch. Following this change of editors, the magazine became much more varied in its interpretation of the Guild's "Arts and Crafts" ethos of the Unity of Art. The disparity between Mackmurdo's style and that of the later editorial collaborations between Horne, Image, Galton and Lionel Johnson, is most apparent in the final volume (VII) for 1892, when Mackmurdo resumed the editorship after his acrimonious split with Horne. In that year, Image's significant annual contribution of poetry is excised entirely, the fine art is greatly reduced in quantity, and, to a large extent, pictorial art is replaced with examples of architectural works. Essays on building materials, garden design, coloured sculpture, metal work and wall-decoration dominate the literary section of the magazine, leading Peter Frost to conclude that the entire volume "might almost have been an early copy of *The Architects' Journal*."<sup>288</sup> This utter disparity between editorial styles is reflected in the Bodley Head's announcement of the post-Guild *Hobby Horse*, stating that this "New Series [is] to be edited by Mr. Herbert P. Horne, under whose direction the

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<sup>288</sup> Peter Frost, "The Century Guild *Hobby Horse* and Its Founders," *The Book Collector* (1978): 358.

publication originally appeared, from 1886 to 1891.”<sup>289</sup> By omitting any mention of Mackmurdo’s 1884 and 1892 editions, Horne, Mathews and Lane appear call into question their very being part of the same publication. However, it is precisely Mackmurdo and Horne’s primary role as architects that is of such great importance when considering the magazine as a physical object.

In delineating British Art Nouveau, as opposed to its continental counterpart, John Russell Taylor has noted the importance of architectural training upon the chief exponents of the art form: “Herbert P. Horne and C. R. Ashbee, were [...] practising architects, while many of the rest – Mackmurdo, Beardsley, Talwin Morris, Anning Bell – worked at some period of their career in an architect’s office.”<sup>290</sup> Despite the mistake of ranking Mackmurdo below that of his own practice’s junior partner, Taylor ably demonstrates the importance of the architect’s eye for physical arrangement in the development of Art Nouveau: “British art nouveau is concerned primarily with the arrangement of empty spaces, continental with their filling.”<sup>291</sup> One has only to examine the works of Aubrey Beardsley to see how Taylor’s conclusion is reached; in Beardsley’s most striking, minimalist pen and ink work, perhaps the very essence of British ’90s Nouveau, the scantest of lines are used to add grace to the open spaces.

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<sup>289</sup> Cited by James G. Nelson, *The Early Nineties: A View from the Bodley Head* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1971) 303.

<sup>290</sup> John Russell Taylor, *The Art Nouveau Book in Britain*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Paul Harris, 1979) 19.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

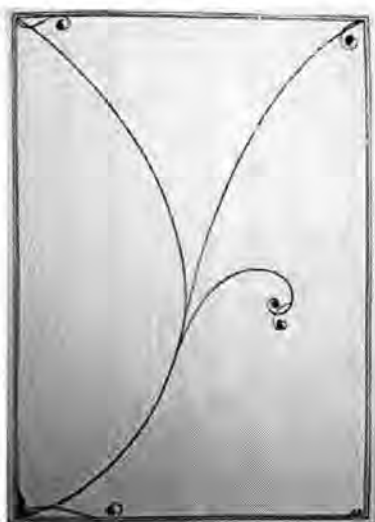


Figure 3 - Beardsley's cover design for Dowson's *Verses* (1896). (Taken from Beardsley, *The Spirit of Beardsley: A Celebration of His Art and Style* [1998], 195.)

Taylor's observation has particular relevance when defining the Art Nouveau book, typified as it is by extravagantly wide-margined, hand-made pages whose expanses of open, empty space self-consciously draw the reader's attention to the finely-wrought, perfectly-positioned block of text. This exquisite arrangement of text and space is to be found in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* from its very inception, as the magazine as a physical object was inspired by "a belief that print, page, margin, illustrations [should stand] in vital relationship to one another."<sup>292</sup> The penchant for empty space had an obvious appeal to the decadent ethos, as such works made excessive use of fine paper, which, along with its intrinsic aesthetic qualities, could be defined as being unnecessary and extravagant. Indeed, Nelson confirms such notions in his examination of the Bodley Head's early publications, stating that "to some frugal minds a neat dark block of print islanded in an ocean of handmade paper was offensive, to others it was aesthetically satisfying."<sup>293</sup> Ada Leverson certainly belonged to the latter category, declaring "Margin in every sense was in demand"

<sup>292</sup> Stansky, *Redesigning the World* 108.

<sup>293</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 82.

during the early 'nineties. Inspired by the Bodley Head edition of John Gray's *Silverpoints* (1893) – “the tiniest rivulet of text meandering through the very large meadow of margin,” – she suggested to Oscar Wilde “that he should publish a book, *all* margin, full of beautiful unwritten thoughts.” Wilde's response reiterates this decadent notion of frivolous expense, stating that the “‘first’ (and last) edition” of the book “must have five hundred signed copies for particular friends, six for the general public and one for America.”<sup>294</sup> By the 'nineties, therefore, the architecturally-inspired Art Nouveau book was an established entity; and, according to Wilde and Levenson's typically decadent musings, it is in the book's physical appearance that its worth is to be found, rather than in its contents.<sup>295</sup>

It is within various studies of Art Nouveau, with specific reference to the Art Nouveau book, that one is to find the most frequent references to the *Hobby Horse* to date. As early as 1913, Holbrook Jackson identified the *Hobby Horse* as being a significant precursor to both the Vale and Kelmscott presses.<sup>296</sup> The ageing Mackmurdo himself stated, in a letter to Lillian Block in 1940, that William Morris founded the Kelmscott Press after Mackmurdo “showed [...] Morris what I had been able to do in the production of a journal” and then suggested he “try his hand with a book.”<sup>297</sup> Mackmurdo's influence upon Art Nouveau book design and illustration may be demonstrated by comparing his device for the Century Guild (1884), as used

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<sup>294</sup> Cited Jullian, *Oscar Wilde* 171.

<sup>295</sup> Again, this is confirmed by Nelson. Recalling the publication of Richard Le Gallienne's *Volumes in Folio* (1889), he states that “It is surely a mark of the time that the poet was clearly more interested in the book's appearance than he was in its contents.” See Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 24.

<sup>296</sup> Jackson, *Eighteen Nineties* 81. See also chapter 19, “The Revival of Printing,” 255-266.

<sup>297</sup> Block, “The Pursuit of Beauty,” 141.

on the back cover of the each quarterly *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, with Aubrey Beardsley's original design for the cover of Wilde's *Salome* (1894).<sup>298</sup>



Figure 4 - Mackmurdo's Century Guild device and Beardsley's original cover design for Wilde's *Salome* (1893). (Taken from William Morris Gallery, *Catalogue of A. H. Mackmurdo and the Century Guild Collection* [1967], title page, and La Bedoyere, *Art Nouveau* [2005], 31, respectively.)

In 1932, the *Weekend Review* cited Mackmurdo as “the founder of the first of the periodicals in which art and literature were associated to a purpose not that of the ordinary commercial magazine.”<sup>299</sup> Peter Frost and John Russell Taylor both view the *Hobby Horse* as the stylistic genesis of the 1890s Little Magazines,<sup>300</sup> with Frost succinctly categorizing it as “the first magazine to become self-conscious.” The *Hobby Horse* was indeed self-conscious in as much as its creators strove to make this magazine whose contents were concerned with Art, a physical work of art in itself. Frost illustrates the continued efforts of the editorial team to reach a stylistic format that befitted the magazine's contents. The format of the 1884 edition was enlarged and redesigned in 1886, and was altered again in 1888, whereupon the *Hobby Horse*

<sup>298</sup> This was rejected for the cover of the 1893 Bodley Head first edition, but the John Lane 1907 re-issue uses the design in gold over green boards.

<sup>299</sup> In a review of his *Selwyn Image: Letters*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1932. Un-numbered clipping, Miscellaneous Papers of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. c.310, 336.

<sup>300</sup> Frost, “Century Guild Hobby Horse,” 360, Taylor, *Art Nouveau Book* 36.

“appeared in the form which has made the magazine famous in the history of typography.”<sup>301</sup> Frost details the “superior” paper and larger typeface, a “sharper version of an Old Style face, in the equivalent of modern 12 point,” along with Horne and Image’s redrawn initial letters and tail-pieces, before declaring that “This was the form which induced Ricketts and Shannon to emulate [the *Hobby Horse*] in *The Dial*.”<sup>302</sup> Indeed, this publication may be seen to be the first significant descendant of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, in both form and content.

Charles de Sousy Ricketts (1866-1931) and Charles Haslewood Shannon (1863-1937) first published *The Dial* (1889-97) in the same year as volume IV of the *Hobby Horse*, and from the very first, this stylistic debt is made clear. Although the later issues (2-5) are more uniform in format and more obviously based on the *Hobby Horse*’s physical appearance, the singular, first issue mimics the Century Guild’s ethos of a self-conscious Arts magazine that is itself a work of art.

This 1889 issue literally puts Art first, having all the fine art, mostly the work of Ricketts and Shannon, reproduced on thin card plates bound into the front of the magazine. The magazine displays a self-consciousness with regard to its own production, akin to the *Hobby Horse*’s thesis of the Unity of Art, by ensuring that the reader’s attention is drawn to all those who took part in the magazine’s physical production. From the first, the reader is made aware of the distinction between the designers and executors of printed works, such as Ricketts’ design for the lithograph “The Great Worm,” “Executed by M. and N. Hanhart.” (*Dial* I, AA.) By volume IV

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<sup>301</sup> Frost, “Century Guild Hobby Horse,” 156.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

(1896) this scrupulous attention to detail is manifest in a prefatory notice proclaiming:

THE WRAPPER AND INITIAL LETTERPIECES IN THE TEXT HAVE BEEN DESIGNED AND ENGRAVED ON THE WOOD BY CHARLES RICKETTS. THE THREE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS MARKED ABOVE WITH A DEVICE HAVE BEEN REPRODUCED, THE FIRST BY THE SWAN ELECTRIC ENGRAVING COMPANY THE SECOND AND THIRD BY MESSRS. WALKER AND BOUTALL. THE LITHOGRAPHS HAVE BEEN PRINTED BY MR. THOMAS WAY. (*Dial*, IV, unnumbered preface.)

From within this idea of self-consciousness *The Dial* departs somewhat from its direct predecessor, with the result being a much more militant stance on the subject of Art with relation to society. The physical appearance of *The Dial* undoubtedly owes a considerable debt to Mackmurdo's shaping hand concerning the development of the Art Nouveau book and his Arts and Crafts-inspired notion of the Unity of Art. However, *The Dial*'s progressive approach to Art and Society within its actual pages appears to be a radical redrawing of the socially-engaged writings of Image, Horne and Galton.

*The Dial* is given one of its earliest reviews, and indeed an advertisement, within the pages of the *Hobby Horse*. The 1889 volume (IV) includes unnumbered pages of "announcements" bound in at the end, one of which proclaims, "Towards the close of August, was published by its Editor, Mr. C. H. Shannon, at his house in the Vale, Chelsea, the first number of a new periodical devoted to Art, named 'The Dial.'" From the very first, *The Dial* appears much more brazen in its "Art for Art's Sake" positioning than its precursor. The perennial problem of the "aesthetic paradox" that lies within any attempt to publish a commercially viable, yet at the same time inherently elitist, periodical, is ignored by Shannon and Ricketts, as the *Hobby*

*Horse*'s editorial note continues, "It is to appear, I understand, at such intervals as the sun of inspiration will permit; hence the name." This indeed proved to be the case, as *The Dial*'s 8-year lifespan spawned just four further issues, published in 1892, 1893, 1896 and 1897, thus straining any rigid definition of the periodical format. It is a little uncertain as to the precise numbers of the first issue, but the more uniform *Dial* issues 2-5 are all numbered editions, limited to 200 copies. Such a rare jewel of artistic finery came at an appropriately high price, though the exact amount is a matter of some debate. Although the index page to the first issue states that the price is seven shillings and sixpence, no price is given on the later, uniform issues. J. R. Tye cites the magazine as costing ten shillings,<sup>303</sup> while James G. Nelson maintains the price was one guinea. These were (almost) annual magazines with an average length of 30 pages, whilst the quarterly *Hobby Horse* averaged 40 pages at two shillings and sixpence.<sup>304</sup> What is immediately apparent in such figures is *The Dial*'s insistence of quality over quantity.

However, early reviews, particularly of the literary contributions, sought to question the quality of the magazine. Although championing the birth of "A modern magazine which does not descend to the abortive regions of magazine verse, which declares the present French School to be a school of 'no interest,'" the *Hobby Horse* reviewer, continues:

The literary portion of the periodical, however, is not technically satisfactory as prose, or equal in interest to the pictorial portion. The absence here of any severity of thought, without which prose cannot be said to exist, is felt, also, throughout the rest of the number.

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<sup>303</sup> J. R. Tye, *Periodicals of the Nineties: A Checklist of Literary Periodicals Published in the British Isles at Longer Than Fortnightly Intervals, 1890 - 1899*, Occasional Publication No. 9 (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1974) 4.

<sup>304</sup> Unlike the *Hobby Horse*, *The Dial* was never so vulgar as to state its actual price on the cover.



“Michael Field” concurred with this assessment, though in somewhat harsher tones: “that mad journal? with some good line work in it, and rubbish for prose.”<sup>305</sup> In a letter to Ricketts and Shannon, William Morris remarked, upon receiving a presentation copy of the first number,

I confess that I looked at the art portion of it with somewhat mixed feelings, as the talent and the aberration of the talent seemed to be in about equal portions. As to the literary portion I will say nothing, as that has to do with my own Craft.<sup>306</sup>

Oscar Wilde, on the other hand, seemed singularly enchanted with the venture, proclaiming, “It is quite delightful [...] but do not bring out a second number, all perfect things should be unique.”<sup>307</sup> As Richard Ellmann infers,<sup>308</sup> Wilde’s enthusiasm for the magazine may have been influenced by the fact that John Gray, with whom Wilde was apparently enamoured at the time, had contributed two of the longest prose works in the number – the fantastic “The Great Worm” and a critical piece, “Les Goncourt.” However, the idea of perfection through being unique would appear to have some significant bearing upon the ethos of the magazine’s contributors.

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<sup>305</sup> Cited Maureen Watry, “At the Sign of the Dial: Charles Ricketts and the Vale Press 1896-1903,” 2004. *U of Liverpool Library*. 17 Oct. 2007.

<<http://sca.lib.liv.ac.uk/collections/exhibs/ValePress.html>> The “Michael Fields” did however change their view of the magazine’s worth, contributing to both the 1896 and ’97 issues.

<sup>306</sup> Cecil [Arthur] Lewis, ed., *Self-Portrait: Taken from the Letters and Journals of Charles Ricketts*, R. A. (London: Peter Davies, 1939) 20.

<sup>307</sup> Charles Ricketts and Jean Paul Raymond [Charles Ricketts], *Oscar Wilde: Recollections* (Bloomsbury: Nonesuch, 1932) 28. Raymond was a fictional character created by Ricketts in an earlier work. The character is used to “frame” the book which consists of conversations with, and letters from, Ricketts himself to his fictional alter ego.

<sup>308</sup> Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 290.

*The Dial* is almost entirely the work of four men: Ricketts, Shannon, Gray and Thomas Sturge Moore. Lucien Pissarro was also part of the founding body, and as an artist he is regularly represented within the magazine, but his contributions are dwarfed by those of Shannon and Ricketts. Literary pieces appear sporadically from “Michael Field,” Charles R. Sturt, Reginald Savage, Emile Verhaeren, W. Delaplaine Scull and Laurence Housman, though none of these writers appear more than twice in all five volumes, and most of them only once. The vast majority of works in *The Dial* are the works of these four men. It is very important that, rather than enlist the help of a multitude of writers and artists in order to fill a quarterly or even fully annual periodical, as did the *Hobby Horse*, Ricketts, Shannon, Gray and Moore only compiled a volume of *The Dial* when “the sun of inspiration” shone on *them alone*.

This concept of inspiration has quite obvious Romantic overtones; indeed, John Gray’s “Great Worm” betrays a direct Romantic influence. The body of the piece is high fantasy, influenced by both medievalism and *The Arabian Nights*, concerning a warrior-serpent who dies from unrequited love, whereupon the beloved is transformed into a Lily growing from his decaying breast. In an epilogue, Gray explains how the story came as a result of a poet falling asleep in a garden, after having reflected upon a Lily and a worm. This revelation of the tale’s inspiration, and especially the dream element in its creation, is almost identical to Coleridge’s introduction to *Kubla Khan*.<sup>309</sup> However, the notion of this inspiration falling on such a select group has another, more recent ancestor, in Walter Pater’s development of Romantic Inspiration in the form of the singular personality, such as his “Leonardo,” which is the central conceit in his seminal *Renaissance*.

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<sup>309</sup> Coleridge, *Christabel: Kubla Khan, A Vision; The Pains of Sleep* 51.

Of these four, Charles Ricketts is the man whose personality has left the largest imprint on much of the writing regarding *fin-de-siècle* London. Joseph Darracott, in his biography of Shannon, states that “Ricketts was the dominant figure in the artistic and literary circle which formed around them in Chelsea (1888-98) and then more privately at Richmond (1898-1902).”<sup>310</sup> An early *DNB* entry for Ricketts declared him “a man of masterful personality [who] loved to influence people,” and George Bernard Shaw described him as “noble and generous [...] a natural aristocrat.”<sup>311</sup> Holbrook Jackson’s barely post-Victorian appraisal of the man and his work also singles out Ricketts’ personality, when considering his role in the development of book design: “But in the books designed by Charles Ricketts we find the expression of an entirely different temperament, or a temperament which was assertively personal and essentially individual, as against the democratic and communal sense of Morris.”<sup>312</sup> This “democratic and communal sense” was an obvious inspiration to Mackmurdo, Horne and Image in the founding of the Century Guild, and in the idea of the Unity of Art expressed within the pages of the *Hobby Horse*. As the *Hobby Horse* progressed, however, one may discern a shift away from Morris and towards Pater as the importance of individual personalities, albeit within a larger artistic community, begins to take hold. Yet, within the much-reduced artistic circle represented in *The Dial*, the figure of Ricketts stands out as having the most significant influence, giving a distinctly narcissistic edge to much of its editorial

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<sup>310</sup> Joseph Darracott, “Shannon Charles Haslewood (1863-1937).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 10<sup>th</sup> November. 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36038>>.

<sup>311</sup> Both quotations cited J. P. G. Delany, “Ricketts, Charles de Sousy (1866-1931).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 10<sup>th</sup> November. 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35746>>.

<sup>312</sup> Jackson, *Eighteen Nineties* 260. This statement is made, interestingly enough, in the chapter headed “Personalities and Tendencies.”

comment.<sup>313</sup> And if the *Hobby Horse*, in its trumpeting of the cult of the personality, was never quite bold enough to assert the great qualities of its own writers directly, *The Dial* would never suffer from such modest restraint.

In the first issue of *The Dial* the editorial comment takes the form of an “Apology” on the final page. The piece is anonymous, but almost certainly penned by Ricketts:

The sole aim of this magazine is to gain sympathy with its views.

Intelligent ostracism meets one at every door for any view whatsoever, from choice of subject to choice of frame. If our entrance is not through an orthodox channel it is not, therefore, entirely our fault; we are out of date in our belief that the artist’s conscientiousness cannot be controlled by the paying public, and just as far as this notion is prevalent we hope we shall be pardoned our seeming aggressiveness. (*Dial* I, 36.)

If the message of the *Hobby Horse* might be taken as being “the public needs to change its view of the importance of Art,” then *The Dial*’s more aggressive stance would appear to distance Art from the tasteless, “paying public” altogether. In rejecting the format of a periodical dependent upon sales, Ricketts and Shannon create in *The Dial* a physical manifestation of “*L’Art pour l’Art*,” a magazine completely divorced from all other considerations besides the artists’ own opinions of their works. The personality of the artist is therefore the only salient feature of the magazine, both in its creation and in its reception. In this way, *The Dial* creates its own immunity to criticism.

No doubt, this defiant, self-assured stance of the “Apology” greatly appealed to Wilde, when taking into account both his views on *The Dial* itself, and his playful,

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<sup>313</sup> A further inference upon Ricketts’ personality may be found in Jullian’s chapter on *Dorian Gray*. Ricketts and Shannon were most intimate friends with Wilde, and Jullian asserts that it was during one of their frequent evenings together that Wilde first conceived the idea for his novel. Jullian notes that “[Wilde] used the décor of Ricketts’ studio for the setting of the first chapter of *Dorian Gray*.” See Jullian, *Oscar Wilde* 184.

fantastic, blank book proposed by Ada Leverson. (Indeed, it is interesting to note that Leverson herself recommends the book to be “decorated with gold by Ricketts, if not Shannon.”)<sup>314</sup> In the proposition of the beautifully crafted, blank book, Wilde and Leverson promote the idea of beauty and artistic theorising above any notions of good or bad content. This in turn has obvious parallels with Pater’s theorising over the personality of Leonardo, and later Image’s “Bundle of Letters” to *his* Leonardo, where beauty may be seen to transcend any moral considerations over behaviour.

The second issue of *The Dial* for 1892 continues in this self-conscious and self-justifying vein. Another “Unsigned” editorial piece appears on page 25, entitled “The Unwritten Book” – the title itself again suggesting a connection with Wilde and Leverson’s theorising over the value of conceptual art. The writer (once more, most probably Ricketts) seeks to defend *The Dial* against critical accusations of it being “mere art eclecticism.” In his rebuttal, the author rings out a singularly self-conscious note of defence, suggesting that the structure and content of the magazine have been forged with an uncanny awareness of its future value, by justifying its stance in terms of its importance to later literary, artistic and cultural historians. *The Dial*, we are told, has its importance in being a “*Document* – that monument of moods.” With typically Dialite artistic flamboyance, the piece describes its value as being akin to

A viol left on a lowering bough by some singer who has ceased, one marigold drowned in a space of water, [which] would convey, within a picture and without, this sense of existence and preexistence, this sense of time. (*Dial*, II, 26.)

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<sup>314</sup> Jullian, *Oscar Wilde* 171.

As the piece continues, Ricketts draws upon one of the central ideas given voice in the *Hobby Horse*, in its expansion of the Paterian Renaissance Personality:

we make no claim to originality, not feeling wiser than did Solomon who doubtless wrote the Song of Songs; for all art is but the combination of known quantities, the interplay of a few senses only; that some spirit seems to transfuse these, is due to a cunning use of a sixth sense – the sense of possible relation commonly called soul; probably a second sense of touch more subtle than the first – and this sense is more common to the craftsman used to self-control than habit would allow. (Ibid.)

Like Pater's Winckelmann, or Horne's "Spirit of the Age" centred around the Court of Charles the First, *The Dial* puts itself among the ranks of singular souls necessary for an apparent Nouveau Renaissance in the early 1890s. As this theme progresses, the *Hobby Horse*'s idea of the linear, historical Renaissance being a misconception (postulated by Arthur Galton) is restated, as *The Dial* echoes its predecessor's idea of a continuum of artistic tradition:

dawn itself promises day only to some, not to all; and Art has been, Art is, this is the pledge that it will be again [...] All past effort has seemed more conscious of aim, more direct, than it was really; we imagine an effort towards renaissance, springing from a white hand beckoning above the ashes of some forgotten city, and seen at some time by one in whom the possible germ of a new art is placed (*Dial*, II, 26-7).

The difference between the historical Renaissance and the present blossoming of Art would appear to be merely one of historical perspective; and akin to Pater and Galton's theorising, the spirit of the Renaissance is not rooted to a period in history, but is the essential, and essentially timeless, spirit of Art itself – "Art has been, Art is [and] will be again."

For the high-minded artists represented in *The Dial*, as with the *Hobby Horse*, modernity is beset on all sides by enemies to True Art, such as the "useless pandering to the crowd" in much that is termed "art," so deftly avoided by the non-

commercial *Dial*. “Copybook culture” is lambasted as being “the only reason for this colourless currency in art and thought;” and yet, within the magazine’s pages it is possible to discern that “the rainbow of Art is still there for Hope to look through, all pleasantness has not been snatched from the meadows and hills of Nature’s royalty, Art has been, Art is, so the present touches wings with the past.” For this reason, Ricketts commends, “let admiration be one of the reasons for the *Dial* to exist; admiration, so often fruitful of self-respect, nay more, it is ‘the essence of all art.’” (*Dial*, II, 27.)

*The Dial* therefore exists in order to be admired, and in being admired it represents the “essence of all art.” When coupled with the magazine’s non-commercial status, and the contributors’ position as the ultimate authority on the magazine’s worthiness as espoused in the “Apology,” it becomes the perfect example of self-justified, theorised Art. *The Dial* thus reads as being significantly more elitist than its high-minded, but more socially-engaged predecessor. This self-justifying aspect of much of the written work counters any negative criticism, as its very position of being Art negates it from being accepted as such by a wide variety of readers. Hence a new value may be found in much of the prose work, if viewed as a deliberate attempt to alienate any chances of a wider readership.

In examining much of the writing in *The Dial* from this angle of it representing deliberately challenging prose, many of the works may be seen in a proto-Modernist light, such as Ricketts’ bizarre tale “The Cup of Happiness” (*Dial*, I, 27). Within this dizzyingly exotic tale woven around a female character – a fusion of Aphrodite and Eve, incorporating the Lilith myth – the kaleidoscopic content is mirrored in the

deliberately fractured form. The tale begins as prose, but transforms into theatrical script, whilst simultaneously changing font. The story ends with its own “Prologue,” and the entirety of the piece leaves the reader somewhat bemused as to narrative plot, being as it is, more an impressionistic suggestion of a tale, than a tale itself. The following article entitled “Sensations” (once more anonymous, though again in Ricketts’ style) continues in this impressionistic vein, using synaesthesia in order to convey the mood, rather than a less sensuous, direct representation of actual events: “light gave almost the impression of a blow;” and the protagonist describes a particular sensation as “falling in key like a phrase of Bach” (*Dial*, I, 34).<sup>315</sup>

Awkward though these early pieces may be, this theme of challenging literature is recurrent throughout *The Dial* as a whole, illustrating its importance to the magazine. Later, and significantly more accomplished, pieces include Sturge Moore’s medieval tale “Old Kitty,” whose awkward sentence structure is reminiscent of high Modernism’s use of older forms of English, such as those employed by Joyce in the chapter “The Oxen of the Sun” from *Ulysses*.<sup>316</sup> The tale begins, “The sun’s goodwill to shine even usually on the place favoured heavenly origin. A hill, too, each red-cheeked dawn perchance found tell-tale” (*Dial* III, 27). Such awkwardness in an opening might indeed be perceived as “seeming aggressiveness” on the part of many readers.<sup>317</sup> This idea of the editors making a conscious effort to make the reading of

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<sup>315</sup> John Russell Taylor has also noted this synaesthetic quality in much of *The Dial*’s content. Remarking upon Ricketts’ initial design for his short story, “A Glimpse of Heaven” (*Dial*, I, 19) he states that “the visible odours diffusing from the resting place of the dead pauper girl, clearly hint at the synaesthesia which Yeats refers to in his introduction to W. T. Horton’s *Book of Images* (1898), ‘a world where nothing is still for a moment, and where colours have odours and odours musical notes...’” See Taylor, *Art Nouveau Book* 91.

<sup>316</sup> See James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Danis Rose (London: Picador, 1997) 365-407.

<sup>317</sup> In his Arnoldian sounding chapter “Philistines: Middle-Class Cultures,” Lawrence James identifies the bourgeois distaste for, and even fear of Aestheticism on account of much Aesthetic art being “sometimes difficult to understand.” James, *The Middle Class* 381.



*The Dial* far from easy is also manifest in the fact that the contents pages for the various editions are frequently shifted from the front to the back of the periodical, are often incomplete, occasionally inaccurate, and from issue 2 onwards, almost always lacking page numbers. Simply navigating oneself through the various issues in an ordered and logical fashion is not at all easy.

From the outset, therefore, alienation, exclusivity and otherness are fundamental to *The Dial*, or to phrase it in terms of the “Apology,” “Intelligent ostracism [in both] choice of subject [and] choice of frame” (*Dial* I, 36). Another side to this notion of otherness and elitism is to be seen in the magazine’s national bias. As the *Hobby Horse*’s editorial note first advertising *The Dial* makes clear, one area in which the new magazine is to be praised is in its attitude towards “the present French School” in art. Ever since Selwyn Image’s 1886 article tackling the xenophobic sentiments of the British Matron letters, the *Hobby Horse* positioned itself as friend and champion of French art. Not only does *The Dial* continue this pro-French bias, but in many ways, the magazine itself could be said to be an Anglo-French production.

Charles de Sousy Ricketts was of mixed European origin, being born in Geneva, the son of Charles Robert, a British Naval officer, and Hélène Cornélia de Soucy, the daughter of Louis, Marquis de Soucy. He grew up in Lausanne and London, but was educated in France, and upon his return to London following his mother’s death in 1880, was “hardly able to speak English.”<sup>318</sup> As stated above, the French artist Lucien Pissarro was involved in the magazine from the first, and his long-standing friendship with both Ricketts and Shannon may be seen in his involvement with the

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<sup>318</sup> Delany, “Ricketts, Charles de Sousy (1866-1931).”

Vale Press, which became “paired” with his own Eragny Press,<sup>319</sup> and his contributions to Shannon and Ricketts’ later periodical, *The Pageant* (1896-7). John Kelly also maintains that Thomas Sturge Moore had “French relatives,”<sup>320</sup> completing the picture of *The Dial* as being a distinctly Francophile publication.

Naturally, this affinity with France was reflected in the contributors’ artistic tastes: Ricketts and Shannon both collected French art (alongside English, Old Masters and Classical and Oriental works) and Shannon himself was a celebrated exhibitor of works at the French-inspired New English Art Club.<sup>321</sup> Both Shannon and Ricketts travelled to Paris to study under the French symbolist painter Puvis de Chavannes, “their favourite French artist,” although, as Nelson notes, following an interview, “Chavannes urged them to return home.”<sup>322</sup> On their return, they set about building the artistic circle that would spawn the Vale Press, and their first-born publication, *The Dial*.

Demonstrating the *Hobby Horse*’s admiration for the magazine, issue 1 opens with an article defending their artistic hero, a theme continued in poetic form in the second issue’s “On a Picture by Puvis de Chavannes” (*Dial* II, 15). Both works are anonymous, but are most likely attributable to Ricketts. The second critical piece in issue 1 is John Gray’s appraisal of “Les Goncourt,” and analogous to much of the writing by Image, Horne and Galton, Gray uses his ostensible subject as a frame for a wider critique of the position of Art in England. In painting the artist as being

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<sup>319</sup> For details see Watry, *At the Sign of the Dial*.

<sup>320</sup> John Kelly, “Moore, Thomas Sturge (1870-1944).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 1<sup>st</sup> December. 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/58827>>.

<sup>321</sup> Delany, “Ricketts, Charles de Sousy (1866-1931).”

<sup>322</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 41-4.

biologically determined, Gray's theorising at times sounds dangerously close to that of Max Nordau: "The artist is always an abnormal creature, a being with an over-developed brain, or diseased nerves, as some express it." However, as his argument progresses, and he focuses more on the subjects in hand, Gray's tones become much more akin to those of Walter Pater: "As specially distinguished from the literary grocer, [the artist] cannot choose but give his own personality in his work." Gray is then led to reflect upon the "peculiar temperament of the Goncourt personality," illustrating their Paterian penchant for experiences in the development of artistic sensibilities by claiming that "they believed strongly in the far superior value of the actually seen and felt." (*Dial*, I, 10.)

From what sounds initially like a standard defence of French Realism (in the vein of much writing on Zola, such as Havelock Ellis's work in *The Savoy*) Gray's argument then begins to shift from a defence of the Goncourts, to an attack on Art's enemies: "a study of some individual dustman has a higher artistic value than a character composed of the second-hand sentiments of a dozen Christian gentlemen." (*Ibid.*) Having identified "Christian gentlemen" as being antagonistic to true artistic expression, Gray then explodes into a diatribe against English bourgeois, typically Protestant, attitudes towards morality in art, representing the antithesis of Another British Matron's attack upon the French:

And what shall we, we English, say? we the chosen? we who understand so well that a book, to be good, must recount a series of good actions? we who like the shadow thrown across the hero's path only for the pleasure of seeing it swept away again? who feel impatient if the wedding is delayed? Germinie Lacerteux stayed out late at night? stole from her mistress? Manette Saloman was not married to Coriolis? Put it away! put it away! Dear me! if Freddy should get hold of it! Shocking blemishes, happily so soon discovered. Let us beware the glittering poison. (*Dial*, I, 12.)

Expanding his attack upon the Christian moralizers, Gray alludes to such attitudes as being class-based, as, once more, the English are damned with faint praise: "To more intelligent people in England, they give the same impression as, now, to the corresponding class in France; except perhaps that the English aversion to the exotic is stronger than the French." (Ibid.) In damning the British Matron letter-writers' views that the French nation has been corrupted by its acceptance of sensuous art, Gray turns this French affinity with art around to attack British nationals; and in doing so, allies such French sentiments with *The Dial*'s own *raison d'être*: "For the French can certainly claim a higher intelligence than we, in that at least some appreciable proportion of them understand the phrase 'art for art's sake.'" (Ibid.)

Reginald Savage's contribution to the first issue, "Notes," continues this argument of English ignorance in the face of true Art. The article is replete with attacks upon the English perception of art, such as his assertion that Monet is "not so original as some English artists appear to think," and in a discussion of the work of "M. [Alfred] Roll," Savage can only remark upon "the incapacity of the English to grasp the note this artist has struck." (*Dial*, I, 24.) The article begins by lamenting the failure of the "Théâtre Libre in London," an off-shoot of André Antoine's radical "free theatre" founded in Paris in 1887,<sup>323</sup> and contrasts its fate with that of the "Exposition des Vingt in Brussels":

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<sup>323</sup> The Théâtre Libre in Paris was famed for avoiding censorship by playing only short runs of a few days and frequently moving playhouses. Details of the Theatre and its founder are scant in English, but a book review detailing some aspects of the company is available: Samuel M. Waxman, "Théâtre Libre D'antoine: I, Le Répertoire Étranger by Francis Pruner," *Comparative Literature* 12.1 (Winter, 1960) 59-61.

Imagine a collection of such varied works of those of MM. Paul Dubois, Besnard, Fremiet, Rops, Rodin, Pissarro, such variety of aims and modes of expression in one English exhibition! Imagine such appreciative catholicity to make it possible! Sufficient reverence for the conscious aims of different artists to make a combination so free from the narrowness of cliques, the bigoted aims of those whose privilege it is for the time being to guard the door. (*Dial*, I, 23.)

Such sentiments mirror Selwyn Image's works "On the Unity Of Art" and "On Catholicity of Taste" in their rejection of typically English narrowness of thought in artistic matters, when compared with that of the French. French art and literature is consistently reviewed and critiqued throughout *The Dial*, such as Sturge Moore's poetry celebrating Rimbauld and anonymous verses "after Rimbauld" and on Maurice de Guérin in issue 2. Charles R. Sturt analyses the works of Gustave Moreau in issue 3, and the direct influence of this particular artist on the artwork of *The Dial* has been highlighted by John Russel Taylor, who states that Ricketts' artistic rendering of Gray's "The Great Worm" in issue 1 "is clearly a virtual pastiche of Moreau,"<sup>324</sup> being, as it is, a near mirror-image of Moreau's *La Salomé Tatouée*.

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<sup>324</sup> Taylor, *Art Nouveau Book* 78.



Figure 5 - Charles Ricketts' *The Great Worm* (c. 1889) and Gustave Moreau's *La Salomé Tatouée* (1876). (Courtesy of Durham University and taken from <http://laminute.canalblog.com/images/Salome.jpg> respectively.)

The opening critical piece in issue 4 is an analysis of J. K. Huysmans' character Durtal, by John Gray, and in issue 5, Emile Verhaeren's poetic contribution, "La Vie Elargie" is rendered in French. From the contributors themselves, therefore, to the subjects and even styles of the artwork and prose represented, *The Dial* represents itself as being more French than English, furthering this sense of alienation, or "intelligent ostracism" from the Philistines that are the English, "paying public." Whereas much of the *Hobby Horse*'s editorial comment centred around the benefits to Britain, should she only change her position on the value of Art, *The Dial* appears merely to be criticizing the British standpoint on Art, and then distancing itself from any such views.

Gray's attack upon Protestant preoccupations with morality in art and Savage's call for "catholicity" of taste in artistic matters also suggests further comparison with the *Hobby Horse* in its portrayal of the Catholic Church. Indeed, much of the writing

within *The Dial* displays a profound sympathy with Catholicism – another area in which the contributors to the magazine divorce themselves from conventional late-Victorian society.

The first issue has as its opening work of fiction a tale by Shannon pointedly entitled “A Simple Story” (*Dial*, I, 5). The tale is centred around “the long-expected day when the Holy Father Hilarion [a Bishop] would stop and bless [the] hearth” of a simple Catholic family. The ritualised religion of the Bishop’s visit, and the family’s near-superstitious idolisation of the visiting clergyman, depict a faith in total contrast to typically Victorian Protestant Christianity, in a manner akin to Ernest Dowson’s portrayal of Marie-Yvonne’s upbringing in his continental story of inter-sectarian love, “A Case of Conscience” (*CGHH* VI, xxi, 9). Moreover, Shannon uses the Catholic otherness of the subject as an inspiration for his challenging, proto-Modernist, prose style. Flying in the face of conventional Victorian prose, “A Simple Story” has virtually nothing in the way of narrative plot. Characters do not change or develop and there is no dramatic tension; the visit of the Bishop merely maintains the current status quo, giving the whole tale a distinctly non-linear, cyclical and certainly unempirical feel. As with much of Ricketts’ fiction, Shannon’s tale is depicted in an impressionistic manner, avoiding the straightforward description of either characters or events. The world of Catholicism is portrayed as being a continuum, and an uncomplicated, yet sensuous mode of being, rather than any empirical Protestant notions of life based upon actions, causes and effects.

These sentiments are echoed in Gray’s essay, “The Redemption of Durtal” (*Dial*, IV, 7) which is essentially a review of Huysmans’ *En Route* (1895). As with much of

Gray's writing, the appraisal of Durtal dwells upon the distinction between the body and the soul, as is apparent in his prediction of Durtal's future:

The body of Durtal is as lost as is possible; there is no more hope for that. The soul of Durtal has to make a journey so long that a view of it would ruin him. At the point of utmost progress in EN ROUTE he is at the beginning of the purgative life. In a very long time he will still be at the beginning. (*Dial*, IV, 11.)

This statement is singularly perceptive, as Huysmans' completed works recounting Durtal's life consist of one, slim volume detailing his sinful exploits, *La Bas* (1891), and a further three, increasingly lengthy works depicting his road to salvation, *En Route*, *La Cathédrale* (1898), and *L'Oblat* (1903). The "purgative life" that Durtal must lead is at loggerheads with Protestant notions of repentance and the concept of being "born again" in a single, empirical act of salvation. The non-linear quality of Durtal's purgatory is clearly depicted as a journey which, after "a very long time," will only leave him "still [...] at the beginning." Catholicism is literally positioned outside of temporality, as the very process of salvation becomes a timeless state of being, rather than Protestantism's single act of salvation that must result in a changed, more sanctified existence – cause and effect. Once more akin to Shannon's "Simple Story," Gray gives an impressionistic, highly sensualised account of the attractions of Catholicism to Durtal, giving a fractured, kaleidoscopic picture of the beauties of Rome:

Hearing the voice of a priest whom he cannot see, he can speak of "la Vaseline de son débit;" and at the same time find the true expression of the plain-chant a worthy pursuit of a lifetime. Its architecture and structural accessories; its images, music, liturgies; the orders of religious, [sic] their dress, rules, even pronunciation; the amount of light, the smell, the quality of the worshippers. (*Dial*, IV, 8).

Salvation comes through timeless ritual, and along with the ritual of the Confession, this purgatorial state is one that is broad enough to include Durtal's *sinfull* body. As



may be gleaned from his comparison of Durtal's soul and body, the issue of bodily sins – in Durtal's case, most unmistakably sexual sins – appear to be of singular fascination to Gray. Looking at Gray's poetry within *The Dial*, this preoccupation with the body and sexual sin is a recurrent theme. The sexualities of Shannon, Ricketts and Gray are ambiguous, although Wilde's involvement with the latter and Gray's lasting intimacy with Marc-André Raffalovich would suggest an essential homosexuality. Within Gray's devotional poetry in *The Dial* there is indeed much in the way of homoerotic imagery.

Catholic dogma can all too easily lend itself to the misogynist, and in Gray's poem "Parsifal" (after Verlaine) woman is depicted as being the essence of temptation and sin, seeking to ensnare the virtuous youth:

Conquered the flower maidens, and the wide embrace  
Of their round proffered arms that tempt the virgin boy:  
Conquered the trickling of their bubbling tongues; the coy  
Back glances; and the mobile breasts of supple grace.

Conquered the woman beautiful; the fatal charm  
Of her hot breast; the music of her babbling tongue:  
Conquered the gate of Hell;  
(*Dial*, II, 8).

For Gray, female sexuality – from her coy glances, trickling tongue and hot, supple breasts, to the very "gate of Hell" – represents sin itself; that is to say, separation from God. When the youth has conquered the temptation that is womanhood, the holy ritual that follows is entirely homosocial. This transition, midway in the poem, also marks a significant shift in imagery, from the clear and direct description of female sexuality, to the much more symbolic, metaphor-laden world of the holy males. The impressionistic imagery of the male ritual is certainly generous enough to allow a homoerotic reading of Gray's all-male ideal. The boy enters into the

presence of “the dying king” and heals him by means of his “heavy trophy” that is “The holy javelin that pierced the Heart of God.” Restored, the King becomes also “high priest of that great gift the living Blood” and by means of this gift of living bodily fluid,

In robe of gold the youth adores the glorious Sign  
Of the green goblet; worships the mysterious Wine.  
And o, the chime of children’s voices in the dome!  
(Ibid.)

The exact nature of this exchange is unclear, although the asexualised “children [...] in the dome” might represent a space outside of any considerations regarding sexuality. However, the notion of a “youth” who gives a physical gift to the older “king” and receives enlightenment in return has obvious parallels with the Socratic model of the master-pupil, lover-relationship.

This essentially masculine, physical element to Gray’s idealised Catholic ritual is repeated in the following issue for 1893 in his poetic interpretation of “A Hymn Translated from the Italian of Saint Francis of Assisi” (*Dial*, III, 31).<sup>325</sup> The opening stanza begins, and each stanza ends, with the repeated refrain “Love setteth me a-burning,” and the whole is depicted as a marriage between the saint and God. Unquestioningly, God is represented as the male partner in the ritual, as He “Had set His ring upon me.” The groom is represented as having conquered his bride, and the saint is literally penetrated by his “new Spouse”:

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<sup>325</sup> Interestingly, there is no readily available evidence to support Gray’s claim that this is a translation from the work of Assisi. This poem may then be included amongst those artistic works that seek to legitimise risqué, erotic content by using a religious framework.

The Conqueror's prize returning,  
 Love's knife had all undone me,  
 All my heart broke with yearning.  
 Love setteth me a-burning.

Once again, the imagery of the "holy javelin" is evoked, but in terms much less obscure, and once more piercing the body of the saint:

I die of very sweetness.  
 Yet be thou not astounded.  
 That lance of Love's completeness  
 So sorrowfully wounded!  
 Oh, broad the iron's meetness!  
 Not one arms length, a hundred  
 Has pierced me with its fleetness.  
 Love setteth me a-burning.  
 (Ibid.)

Without the frame of being a translation of Assisi, this stanza could indeed be read as being flagrantly homoerotic. The very act of salvation is portrayed as being physical struggle with Christ, in itself reminiscent of the story of Jacob's struggle with the Angel, but given the marriage analogy of the poem as a whole, Gray's depiction of the saint and Christ has powerful homosexual overtones:

On Christ I warred right knightly.  
 Great skill against him urging,  
 I grappled with him tightly,  
 The dastard in me purging.  
 Love setteth me a-burning.

In the final stanza, Christ's love overcomes and conquers the saint entirely, "Love lavished without measure / To Christ at length united." Clearly Francis', and by extension, Gray's, relationship with Christ is depicted as a marriage in a very real sense. Although a common metaphor for Christ and the Church within the scriptures themselves, this metaphor of holy, homosexual marriage can be used on any number of levels, from the purely chaste and devotional ideal of a spiritual unity with God, to

an essentially physical and sexualised perception of the deity, or perhaps a deification of the sexual act. The sincerity of John Gray's personal faith is beyond doubt, as is manifest in the fact of his attaining the position of Canon; however, within his poetry, his religious beliefs interweave with homosexual desires and fantasies, resulting in works that are dialogic, ambiguous or ambivalent, uniting the spheres of bodily sin and spiritual sanctity. Such an embodiment of sin within the devotional life is a fundamentally Catholic notion; the fact that any such behaviour is anathema to Victorian Protestant sensibilities is made perfectly clear within the more militantly Protestant literature of the time, such as Bryce's *Confessional Unmasked*.

Within *The Dial*, therefore, one can find a fleeting reference to Catholicism, or rather catholicity, in defence of Art, akin to Image, Galton and Horne's works in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, in Savage's article "Notes." There is also anti-Puritanical writing, although not specifically aimed at the Protestant Church. The greatest part of Catholicity within *The Dial* – all works penned by Gray – is more concerned with the personal sphere, be that of Durtal, Assisi or ultimately Gray himself. More akin to Ernest Dowson, or more particularly, Lionel Johnson, John Gray uses the catholic qualities of Catholicism as a space in which to create his own, individual form of the Christian religion, incorporating notions of sin, suffering and homosexual desire. Hence the inherent otherness of Catholicism itself is compounded within *The Dial* by Gray's fusion of Catholic ritual with homoerotic imagery, in a manner much more overt than in the *Hobby Horse*, accentuating *The Dial*'s distance from the Victorian middle-class norm. The fact that much of the work within *The Dial* may be perceived as having a distinctly homosexual bias is inferred by Lambert and Ratcliffe, as they record that "The Bodley Head's imprint

disappeared [from *The Dial*] after the alarming homosexual excitements of 1895.”<sup>326</sup>

Clearly John Lane was concerned over the sexually illicit stance of Ricketts and Shannon’s magazine.

From within this area of a sexualised form of religious devotion, *The Dial* may be seen to have further links with the *Hobby Horse*, in its use of religious subjects as a “legitimation” of sensual or erotic art, such as Shannon’s lithograph, “Umbilicus Tuus Crater Tornatilis, Numquam Indigens Poculis. Venter Tuus Sicut Acervus Trici, Vallatus Liliis” (*CGHH*, VI, xxii, to face 41). Shannon uses the Biblical tale of the “Return of the Prodigal” to depict a homosexual kiss within the first issue (*Dial*, I, AB).



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Figure 6 - Charles Shannon's *Return of the Prodigal* (c. 1889; courtesy of Durham University Library).

<sup>326</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 60.

In issue 2, *The Song of Songs* is again used, this time by Ricketts, as a framing for an openly erotically charged illustration of the naked Shulamite offering herself to her lover (*Dial*, II, to face 22).



Figure 7 - "My Hair is Filled with the Drops of the Night" by Charles Ricketts (c. 1892; courtesy of Durham University Library).

Here *The Dial* shows itself to be the true descendant of the *Hobby Horse*, in its brazen, uncompromising portrayal of the “first principle” of Art, as espoused by Selwyn Image to Herbert Horne: “the gospel of sensuousness, [which is] the very foundation for fine art.”<sup>327</sup>

<sup>327</sup> Letter to Horne, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1889. Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 64.

From the outset, *The Dial* trumpets its defiant stance on sensuality, with issue 1 offering Ricketts' sensual adaptation of Moreau's work emblazoned in full colour as the opening image (*Dial*, I, AA). As stated above, Shannon's "Return of the Prodigal" is the second image, and the first of two homosexual kisses within the opening art section. The second is his illustration for Ricketts' "A Glimpse of Heaven," which depicts a lithe, female angel swooping down to earth and gathering up a beautiful young girl as she kisses her tenderly on the mouth .



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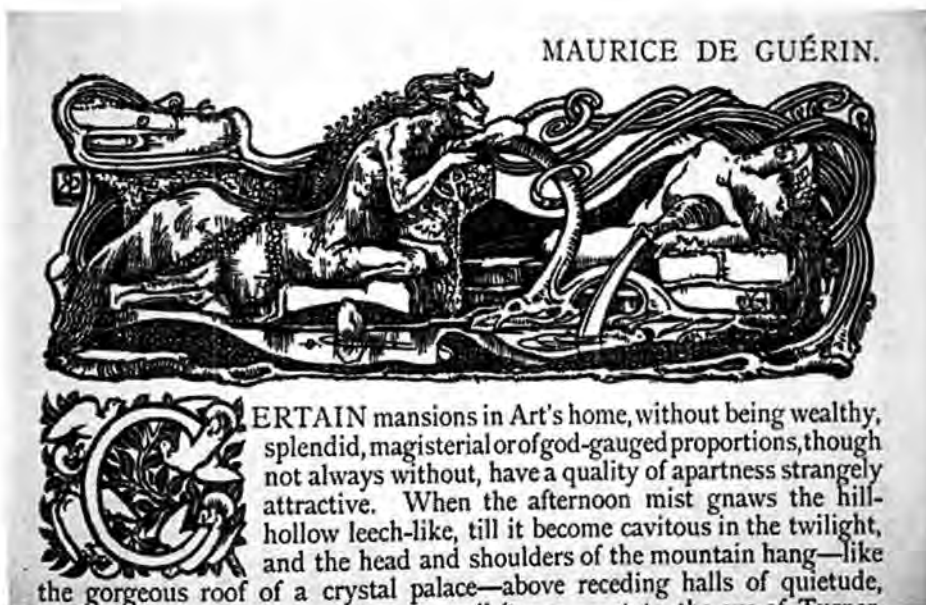
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Figure 8 - Charles Shannon, *A Glimpse of Heaven* and *The Queen of Sheba* (c. 1889; courtesy of Durham University Library).

In plate AD, Shannon depicts what must be the very apex of sensuality within art in the magazine, with his rendering of "The Queen of Sheba" in the pose of a classic

nude at her toilet. The illustration is sensual in almost every aspect, comprising a voluptuous nude, glancing over her shoulder, amidst the swirling vapours of incense and steam, rising from a flower-strewn bath, surrounded by bottles and jars of perfume and oils.

This level of sensuous, even erotic, art continues within the body of the magazine, such as Ricketts' end-piece to Gray's "The Great Worm" which appears to be a fusion of Botticelli's *Venus* and Bernini's *Teresa*, and his initial-piece to the anonymous, impressionistic critique of "Maurice de Guérin," which depicts a Centaur brooding over a particularly voluptuous nude in a pose suggesting recent or impending ravishment.



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Figure 9 - Charles Ricketts, initial piece to "Maurice de Guerin" (c. 1892; courtesy of Durham University Library).



A very large number of the short stories within *The Dial* have a marked sexual content, many sharing similarities with Hardy's works concerning sexuality in rustic England, such as Sturge Moore's "Old Kitty" (*Dial*, III, 27). W. Delaplaine Scull's one, significant, contribution, "The Writing on the Wall," deals with sexual jealousy, betrayal and death within the artistic communities of Renaissance Italy (*Dial*, IV, 19). However, the most sensuous written works within *The Dial* are without exception drawn from the Classical world, the very birthplace of Art, Literature and Culture, according to Image, Galton and Horne.

The idea of voyeurism is present in much of the artwork represented in *The Dial*; in a remarkable number of the works included, nudes and sensual representations of the female form are almost invariably depicted in a room with a mirror. This image of the mirror, encapsulating as it does the notions of both voyeurism and narcissism, is the central conceit in Sturge Moore's masterful adaptation of the tale of "Danaë" (*Dial*, III, 2). The opening stanza playfully introduces the idea of voyeurism, or rather the lack of it, in describing the solitude in which Danaë's father has placed her in order to preserve her chastity:

In her fresh silent mind – in nudity,  
 No flush-faced shame dared hinder to enjoy,  
 Her beauty – purely with no least alloy  
 of vanity, since she had never seen  
 Eyes like those to which modest maidens screen  
 Themselves from [...]  
 (Ibid.)

However, the presence of a mirror violates this temple of chastity, as Danaë views herself for the first time, and through her eyes, the poet paints the picture of her

maturing body for the voyeuristic reader. Believing her reflection to be her twin, Danaë reflects upon the changes in the perceived other, that is herself:

Not once had she yet missed her,  
 As o'er their earliest chubby limbs had come  
 A gradual change, a whimsical, winsome  
 Awkwardness peeping out till plumpness went:  
 O'er salient points a certain tightness lent  
 A peevish pinched appearance; in sight too  
 Their shoulder blades moved looselier: a new  
 Sly meagreness had crept over them  
 (Ibid).

Inevitably, this process leads Danaë on to a gradual appreciation of the effects of her dawning sexuality:

Strange inner effervescence sparkled gaily  
 Out through their eyes. The undecided place  
 Of budding breasts, dissimulating grace  
 As March flakes feign the snowdrops calm, shows forms  
 Hazy like mushrooms when the night-time warms,  
 That globe and gleam, yet leave the stars in doubt  
 If on the dewy slopes they shift about.  
 (Ibid).

In depicting the further maturation of the female form, Moore uses the sensuous, tactile metaphor of the potter's wheel in describing God's designing of woman:

When moulds the potter on his whirling wheel  
 Dumb clay, a hint of final curves will steal  
 From clever hands in sapience sure; just so  
 Quaint querulous suggestions of a flow  
 Of contour simpler, more capacious, slips  
 From God's thumb when he moulds a woman's hips.  
 Her thighs will lengthen faster than they round,  
 Till their delightful devious line be found.  
 The heels, too narrow, of the little feet  
 Will give her steps a wayward wav'ring sweet.  
 As when unwrapped, the heavy dahlias lean,  
 Her head nods, nods.  
 (Ibid.)

Moore's poem is an unmistakable celebration of the female body, fetishistic in its meticulous attention to the development of Danaë's maturing figure. The same issue includes a further, though slightly more veiled, allusion to the development of the female form, as Shannon quotes from Sappho in his illustrations for the Vale Press edition of *Daphnis and Chloe* (1893).

Entitled "The Topmost Apple," Shannon's illustration depicts the naked, young Daphnis reaching out towards an apple, far beyond easy reach, as Chloe waits below hiding her head in her hands. The picture is accompanied by the quotation

DAPHNIS PLUCKS FROM THE TOPMOST BOUGH WHERE THE  
GATHERERS HAD FORGOTTEN IT THE TOPMOST APPLE LEST PERCHANCE  
FALLING IT SHOULD BE TRODDEN INTO THE PURPLE GROUND OR BITTEN BY  
THE VENOUS LIPS OF SOME SERPENT. (*Dial*, III, to face 26)

These lines are a fusion of fragments 93 and 94 of Wharton's *Sappho* (1885), the first of which reads

As the sweet-apple blushes on the end of the bough, the very end of the bough, which the  
gatherers overlooked, nay overlooked not but could not reach.<sup>328</sup>

Wharton's notes expand upon Sappho's poetry; citing Himerius, he states that "It was for Sappho to liken the maiden to an apple, allowing to those who would pluck before the time to touch not even with the finger-tip, but to him who was to gather

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<sup>328</sup> Henry Thornton Wharton, *Sappho: Memoir, Text, Selected Renderings, and a Literal Translation*, 3rd ed. (London: John Lane, 1895) 132.

the apple in season to watch its ripe beauty.”<sup>329</sup> Obviously, Shannon’s illustration is alluding to Chloe’s developing body, and Daphnis’ desire to “reach” her. The fact that this allusion lies beneath two layers of Classical obfuscation only adds to the feeling of secretive titillation for the cognizant reader. In all of these works, therefore, *The Dial* may be seen to be revelling in sensuality, using Classical tales as a framework for exploring and depicting blossoming womanhood in a manner diametrically opposed to the sentiments of the British Matron and her cohorts.

In the final issue of 1897, John Gray uses the tale of *Leda and the Swan* to depict the sexual act itself, within the legitimized, scholarly setting of poetical interpretation from the Classics, very much akin to Pierre Louÿs’ later use of the same tale in his *Twilight of the Nymphs* (1925):

[...] the swan floats near;  
 And bidding Leda not to fear  
 Adventure with him by the beck  
 Of his keen eyes and writhing neck,  
     Enticeth till her breast  
 Beyond the parapet doth rest;  
 Until a timid hand leans out  
 And folds the downy breast about.

Over the margin slips  
 The lithe blithe line of Leda’s hips;  
 And straightway hence the swan doth speed,  
 Exultant for his rapturous deed.

    The glory of his course:  
 Whence his quick gesture and his force  
 Excite the like in Leda’s limbs,  
 Who like a sturdy swimmer swims

    Beside her feathered lord  
 And swift assistance doth afford.  
 (*Dial*, V, 13.)

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<sup>329</sup> Wharton, *Sappho* 133. Ricketts’ fascination with the Classical world may be gleaned from his collected memoirs and letters, and his love of Sappho in particular is evident in letters between Lewis and Ricketts, where the latter again quotes these very fragments. See Lewis, ed., *Charles Ricketts* 359-60.

In thus representing sexuality and the sexual act itself, *The Dial* is striking a most unrepentant pose on matters of sensuality in the arts, so dear to the heart of Selwyn Image and his colleagues in the *Hobby Horse*. What is most conspicuous about Gray's poem, however, is the fact that, within the last two editions, it is the only work to depict sexuality openly, even if it is presented in Classical robes. Its singular position in this matter leads towards the very heart of *The Dial*'s status. This is due to the timing of *The Dial*'s production, spanning as it does, the all-important year of 1895.

From the very first, *The Dial* positioned itself outside of society, unlike the *Hobby Horse*, whose *cause célèbre* was the rehabilitation of Art *within* Society. As the *Hobby Horse* strove towards a Nouveau Renaissance for society's sake, *The Dial* retreated into its own ivory tower, to reflect on the meaning of Art, totally divorced from social concerns. As the *Hobby Horse* is seen to be theorising over the position of Art in society, and the relative merits of that relationship, *The Dial* theorises on the meaning of Art alone. Elitism is the natural concomitant of superior craftsmanship, and so *The Dial* creates a vision of Art that is deliberately exclusive, as may be seen in much of its experimental prose style. Ricketts constructs a proto-Modernist theory of conceptual, true Art that must necessarily be separate from the masses – that is to say, the English masses. The magazine thus depicts itself as being un-English in its Francophilia, its embracing of continental Catholicism, and its depiction of sensuality and the exotic, to which, according to Gray, the English have an innate “aversion.” This wholesale rejection of Victorian Englishness also finds expression in the homoerotic writings of Gray, all of which are grounded in

continental notions of religious experience, not to mention being the very antithesis of bourgeois Victorian attitudes to masculinity – “Unenglish and Unmanly,” to quote David Hilliard.

*The Dial* clearly advocates that artists be unrelated to society, as opposed to the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, whose founding members were all grounded in the socially-engaged philosophies of Ruskin and Morris. However, the trials of Oscar Wilde in the spring of 1895 forced social concerns upon the editors of *The Dial*, whether they would or no. Despite *The Dial* being a mere 200 copy-per-issue artistic oddity, the use of the 100-copied *Chameleon* in Wilde’s trials ably proved that eclectic, and especially sexually-subversive, magazines could no longer presume to be beyond the scrutiny of the Victorian Judicial beasts roused by Wilde’s activities.

During the hiatus between the third and fourth issues of *The Dial* (1894-5), a significant change happened to the “inspiring sun” that shone upon Ricketts, Shannon and their intimate colleagues. In tandem with Lane’s withdrawal of the Bodley Head device, for the final two issues, all reference to homosexuality is excised. The original *blazon* of sensual nudes that met the eyes of the readers in 1889 is pared down to just one, somewhat staid, representation of the female form in Shannon’s “The Dressing Room” (*Dial*, V, to face 8). Gray’s “Leda” is therefore singularly impressive in this light, as being something of an erotic oddity within these later, more timorous, issues.

Unique though the poem may be in this respect, Gray’s “Leda” is in keeping with the final issue as a whole, being as it is, concerned with the Classical world. From the

cover of the very first issue – a sundial overlooked by Classical busts – the artwork and culture of the Greek and Roman worlds have been a constant presence in *The Dial*. However, in the final issue, this pagan element becomes the overriding, dominant theme, as *The Dial*'s select band enact a personal Renaissance, bringing the Classical world to a tiny fragment of Victorian Britain. Issue V begins with Shannon's lithograph "The Infancy of Bacchus," and includes pagan poetry from Housman and "Field," alongside Gray's "Leda." Pan himself is represented twice, pictorially, with Sturge Moore's "Pan Island" facing page 12, and Ricketts' "Pan Hailing Psyche Across the Water" facing page 24. The final piece of creative prose to grace *The Dial*'s pages is Sturge Moore's translation of Maurice de Guérin's "The Centaur," being a vibrant, first-person perspective of life as this Classical creature. The centaur tells his story to Melampus, the Greek gifted with the ability to speak with animals, and describes himself as "the oldest and saddest" of his race (*Dial*, V, 17). Recalling the "internal fire" of his youth, the centaur describes his descent into old age, finally stating, "As for me, O Melampus, I decline into old age calmly, as do the setting constellations" (*Dial*, V, 21). These closing sentiments are reminiscent of much of Walter Pater's work, especially the ending of *The Renaissance*, and the opening passages of *Marius the Epicurean*. The "wandering gods" remain, though the pagan era fades, and they find themselves strangely preserved as the world teeters on the brink of another age, in which they themselves are exiled (*Dial*, V, 19).

Moore's translation appears tantalisingly apposite, coming as it does at the very end of *The Dial*'s existence; and after the seismic shift in social trends following Wilde's conviction, the tale all too easily lends itself to the idea of the ending of an era.

Though the *Dial*'s final year of publication, 1897, marks the temporal end of the

present study, the tale of *The Dial* does not represent the journey's end in itself.

Covering once more the years 1893-1897, the periodicals of Elkin Mathews, John Lane and Leonard Smithers represent the most notorious descendents of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*.



### 3.2 The Bodley Head and the Little Magazines.

As the early 1890s progressed, one firm came to dominate the field of decadent publications within Victorian Britain. For James G. Nelson, The Bodley Head was “a small bookshop and publishing firm which in so many ways summed up the spirit and ideas of that fascinating aesthetic milieu” that was the British *fin de siècle*.<sup>330</sup> At the centre of this triumphant company sat John Lane, “the moving spirit behind the success of the firm. He was the untiring salesman and the ubiquitous maker of contracts. He was the real, effective herald of Beardsley’s success, with *The Yellow Book*.”<sup>331</sup> Indeed, the careers of many artists and writers such as Beardsley, Arthur Symons, John Gray and the Rhymers’ Club as a whole, would seem to owe their initial success and notoriety to The Bodley Head, whilst others, such as Ricketts and Shannon were to reach a wider audience for their work through this most successful publishing company. It is this very notion of a successful company that sets The Bodley Head and the magazines they published apart from the aesthetic magazines founded in the 1880s, *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* and *The Dial*. In examining the growth of The Bodley Head as a company, one becomes aware of a profoundly different ethos underpinning the firm, when compared to the sanctified creeds of pure Art espoused by the Century Guild and the Vale Press.

Originally established in 1887 by Elkin Mathews as an antiquarian bookshop in Exeter (where he had traded as such for several years already) The Bodley Head moved to London in October of that year on the instigation of his new partner, and

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<sup>330</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* v.

<sup>331</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 88.

fellow Devonian, John Lane.<sup>332</sup> Although the business was run by Mathews alone until Lane became fully committed to the firm in 1892, it was Lane who was the “man of action,” with a “superb business head,” and who came to dominate the partnership in matters of commercial publishing.<sup>333</sup> With the arrival of Richard Le Gallienne as the first of the company’s readers and early author of poetry and prose, Lane and Mathews settled on a business formula with Mathews taking charge of the antiquarian and book binding aspects, whilst Lane was the talent scout and principal agent for promoting the firm in the market place.<sup>334</sup>

From the outset, Lane is depicted as a businessman first and foremost. In a note to Mathews, dated 1884, well before their formal partnership, Lane urges his friend to “buy all the copies [...] that you can meet” of the Mermaid series of Marlowe’s plays, on account of “the first issue [being] withdrawn in consequence of some blasphemous lines in a note of the appendix.” Such rarities, he assures Mathews, “are certain to go up.”<sup>335</sup> Mathews, by comparison, is described as being “rather fussy and old-maidish in his ways,” and moreover, “a genuine bibliophile.” By all accounts, and in sharp contrast to Lane, who saw rare books as a swift route to profit, it was Mathews’ bibliophilia that drove his business practice; it was because he was so “loth to see any book depart that he charged such formidable prices for them.”<sup>336</sup> Within this fundamental difference in approach, one may see the seeds of the partnership’s eventual demise, which occurred in 1894. Indeed, Lambert and Ratcliffe assert that Lane desired sole ownership of the firm from as early as 1889,

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<sup>332</sup> See Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 1-3.

<sup>333</sup> See Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 4-12.

<sup>334</sup> See Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 12-13.

<sup>335</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 15.

<sup>336</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 16.

but due to his own financial standing at the time, the partnership remained a necessity.<sup>337</sup>

In a marked departure from the Century Guild's brotherhood of Ruskinian Knights, or *The Dial's* sun-inspired flowerings of true Art, Lane's company displays a ruthless dedication to commercial success that overrides such matters as taste, beliefs or even loyalty. The Bodley Head could easily assimilate paradoxical ideals, if doing so might result in a healthy profit. The firm's initial reader, Le Gallienne, and William Watson (both of whom were to become best-selling poets for the firm) were "passionately anti-decadent and anti-French, or at any rate Frenchified English."<sup>338</sup> Indeed, Le Gallienne's sentiments on such matters are duly expressed in his *Young Lives* (1898), which bares a marked similarity in theme to Mallock's *The New Republic*.<sup>339</sup> However, that did not prevent the firm from publishing what is arguably, in bibliographical terms, its masterwork, John Gray's *Silverpoints* (1893) which is described as expressing "the French poetic idiom in English,"<sup>340</sup> and naming and encasing *The Yellow Book* in a manner suggesting its kinship to popular, risqué French novels of the time.

Oscar Wilde was "greatly disliked by John Lane [...] a sentiment that was cordially reciprocated,"<sup>341</sup> yet both saw the financial advantage in working together, producing many literary and bibliographical masterpieces, such as *Salomé*, *Lady Windermere's*

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<sup>337</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 59.

<sup>338</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 82.

<sup>339</sup> Cited Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 211-3.

<sup>340</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 198. Indeed, a large proportion of the poems included are translations from French works.

<sup>341</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 25.

*Fan* (both 1893) and *The Sphinx* (1894).<sup>342</sup> Indeed, Lane took considerable risks in accommodating Wilde, whilst Lane believed the relationship to be profitable.

Wilde's barely concealed affair with Lane's employee, Edward Shelley, which became public knowledge at the second trial, was duly tolerated by Lane, as Lambert and Ratcliffe state, "however annoying the business of one's office being used as a pick-up point for homosexuals," Lane did not see such illegal behaviour as being a barrier to his dealing with "the famous and potentially profitable Oscar Wilde."<sup>343</sup> However, as is ably demonstrated by Lane's abandonment of Wilde following his trials, Lane was only happy to deal with the subversive decadents "so long as there was no danger of his getting burned."<sup>344</sup> The firing of Aubrey Beardsley at the time of Wilde's trials also shows Lane's preference for commercial survival over loyalty, not to mention the duplicitous way in which he treated Elkin Mathews following the firm's split in 1894.<sup>345</sup> In addition, Le Gallienne also had cause to air his grave "misgivings about what he optimistically called 'Lane's loyalty' – a volatile quality at best,"<sup>346</sup> demonstrating that virtually all who worked with the man identified his own preference for commercial success over matters of loyalty or individual tastes in art.

It is interesting to note that the more traditional, Victorian poetry published by the firm, such as Le Gallienne's *English Poems* (1892) and the works of William Watson, greatly outsold the decadent poetry by the likes of Dowson, Symons and

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<sup>342</sup> The Bodley Head's original edition of *The Sphinx*, decorated by Ricketts, is widely held to be one of the finest bound books of the British *fin de siècle*. The initial run of only 200 copies resulted in first editions becoming collectors' items immediately, and such copies are valued today (2007) at well over six thousand pounds.

<sup>343</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 55.

<sup>344</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 268.

<sup>345</sup> See Nelson, *The Early Nineties* chapter 8, 266-279.

<sup>346</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 46.

Gray.<sup>347</sup> Yet there can be no doubt that the decadent poets and artists added significant kudos to The Bodley Head, during the early nineties, as Nelson's opening appraisal of the firm duly demonstrates. *The Bodley Head 1887-1987* clearly shows that Lane was a fair-weather friend to the decadents, for whom their early notoriety and mild scandals had offered much in the way of free publicity.<sup>348</sup> Indeed, in the brief months in between the split from Mathews and the Wilde debacle, Lane's business plans apparently reflect this detached and purely business-like relationship with the decadent movement with which his company had hitherto enjoyed such a symbiotic relationship. Upon his move to the Albany, Lane felt positive over the company's future:

Business was booming. All those minor poets were still going strong, even if he felt in his bones that their star was waning; and now, having made his mark, indeed his name, on this small scale, he could now be a real publisher, and issue books which really caught his own fancy.<sup>349</sup>

There is, however, one aspect of Lane's company which joins the commercial Bodley Head with the former members of the Century Guild and Ricketts and Shannon's Vale Press: The Bodley Head made beautiful books. Many of the firm's books were printed at the Chiswick Press, the same company who printed *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* and later *belles-lettres* by the likes of Leonard Smithers. The Bodley Head established the format of the art nouveau book within the market place, once it had been formulated by the Century Guild and the Vale Press. Ada Leverson's singling out of the Bodley Head's *Silverpoints* as the archetypal nouveau

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<sup>347</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 215.

<sup>348</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 68.

<sup>349</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 95.

book, in her fantasia of Wilde's unwritten book, clearly demonstrates the firm's commitment to making good quality, aesthetically pleasing, limited edition books.

It is in this light that much writing on the "Yellow Nineties" views Lane's company; his volumes were "a marked contrast to the general run of Victorian books considered as physical objects."<sup>350</sup> According to Nelson, the Bodley Head book was a strong reaction "against the Victorian book which was considered synonymous with the vulgarity and commercialism surrounding middle-class life." Dwelling on the title page of Whistler's *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890), he also remarks that "in every way [it was] a slap in the face of the bourgeois Victorian way of doing things (just as is the subject matter of the book itself)."<sup>351</sup> Viewed from the standpoint of traditional Victorian publishing, therefore, The Bodley Head was subversive, risqué and due to its commercial basis, a much more high-profile exponent of these artistically subversive trends. Lane's Art Nouveau books were a minor scandal in themselves, and soon became "the talk of the town,"<sup>352</sup> cementing his commercial identity.

Yet even this apparent homage to aesthetics is rooted in commerce and sound business practice. Nelson's thorough examination of the Bodley Head's economic base uses Ellic Howe's *The London Compositor* (1947) to examine the profitability of book production in the early 1890s:

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<sup>350</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 36.

<sup>351</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 48 & 52.

<sup>352</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 42.

In 1891 the cost of typesetting was based on 1,000 ems and then the ten-point size of type. Since it was easier and speedier for the printer to work with larger type sizes, type sizes above ten-point were discounted at the rate of 1/4d. a point per 1,000 ems [...] similarly discounts of 3/4d. per 1,000 ems were allowed for printing separated by six-point leads and more.<sup>353</sup>

Hence large-print, well-spaced type was cost effective. Furthermore, discounts would be given by printers to publishers of works that had fewer words per page, making the wide-margined art nouveau book a commercially viable proposition, and gave particular preference to poetry over prose. Alongside the printing of the books, the Bodley Head was also famed for its limited editions. Although obviously cashing in on the contemporary vogue for first editions and rare books,<sup>354</sup> this also had the advantage of keeping printing costs down and avoiding the dead weight of remaindered stock. Coupled with the dubious practice of the “advance market” – “an artificial higher price brought about by the retention of a number of copies by the seller” –<sup>355</sup> The Bodley Head’s manipulation of the market earned them the scorn of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who, when commenting upon the “first edition mania” of the day, singled out Lane’s firm for issuing “nearly all their books on the principle that rarity, not excellence, involves a speedy rise in price.”<sup>356</sup>

The Bodley Head was indeed fashionable during the early 1890s, but then, this particular fashion also made good sense economically. Ian Fletcher’s appraisal of the life and works of John Gray, in his introduction to Gray’s poems, dwells on this economic aspect of *Silverpoints*, stating that the book is

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<sup>353</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 85.

<sup>354</sup> See Nelson, *The Early Nineties* chapter 3, 77-110.

<sup>355</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 24.

<sup>356</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 75.

probably the most extreme example of the limited edition of a minor poet, the point where the esoteric becomes the profitable through calculating the point at which the reader's tolerance would falter, the whole being embellished with a design by a contemporary artist.<sup>357</sup>

Profitability and building in a calculation of the "reader's tolerance" in designing a publication could not be further from the "sun of inspiration" ethos of *The Dial*, or the no less vociferous anti-commercialism in the pages of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*. Fletcher also makes the observation that this era of publishing heralded by the Bodley Head, marked the turning point in the fortunes of minor poets, as their financial survival moved from depending upon patrons to "publicity," and the need to succeed in the market place.<sup>358</sup>

The vogue of decadent minor poets presented a fashionable opportunity for commercial success. According to Nelson, the early nineties were unique in the history of publishing, as the newly emerging mechanical print overlapped with more antiquated forms of book production. This led to a very short window of opportunity for the publishers of short run, aesthetically pleasing books at very low prices. Citing Marjorie Plant, he demonstrates how in the years following the Bodley Head's initial successes, "production costs more than doubled," but by then, the firm was well established.<sup>359</sup> Ever the consummate capitalist, John Lane spotted this window of opportunity, allowing him to publish works whose fashionable qualities would establish the name of his business whilst simultaneously making him a healthy profit. Hence, unlike the art-centric and socially elite ideologies of the publishers of the *Hobby Horse* and *The Dial*, one may see in John Lane that icon of the Victorian

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<sup>357</sup> Ian Fletcher, ed., *The Poems of John Gray* (Greensboro, NC: ELT- U of North Carolina P., 1988) 8.

<sup>358</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Poems of John Gray* 6.

<sup>359</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 84.



middle-classes – the self-made, successful businessman. Indeed, The Bodley Head may be viewed as being a shining example of Victorian commerce, as the company rapidly expanded, opening an American branch in 1896 and, through a series of alliances with the likes of Unwins and the Reinhardt group, survives to this very day. The fact that Lane's nephew and successor, Allen, went on to found Penguin Books during the 1930s,<sup>360</sup> ably demonstrates how from the Bodley Head sprang a veritable publishing empire.

In this respect, John Lane displays more than a little of the "ingenuity, enterprise and perseverance" which were the "mainsprings" behind the middle-class domination of Britain,<sup>361</sup> not to mention the middle-class, capitalist mantra of "the right of any man to go as far as his talents allowed."<sup>362</sup> In examining Lane's personal history, there is much to support this depiction of the decadents' key publisher as being essentially middle-class. While his parents display qualities almost parodic of the Victorian middle-class norm – his "father was a staunch Tory, his mother a staunch mother" – the young Lane had a "quick intelligence, and an instinct for upward mobility."<sup>363</sup> This defining aspect of middle-class self-advancement is clearly manifest in the accounts of The Bodley Head's transition from being simply booksellers to becoming publishers. The humble bookseller was counted as being a "tradesman," and despite Lane and Mathews' love of such a trade, "that enthusiasm only masked a wish in each man to develop into a publisher – in John Lane's case, doubtless, as

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<sup>360</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head*, see "The Penguin Offshoot," 252-66.

<sup>361</sup> James, *The Middle Class* 1.

<sup>362</sup> James, *The Middle Class* 243.

<sup>363</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 9.

much for social as for bookish reasons.”<sup>364</sup> In expanding into publishing, Lane was very consciously moving up the social ladder.

As Fletcher’s observation of the shift in minor poets’ fortunes from “patrons” to “publicity” also suggests, this middle-class ethic of self-reliance, profitability and upward mobility must also be shared by the poets whom Lane published. For a poet to be published by the Bodley Head, their work must be marketable, and by conforming to Lane’s business template, they might earn their living by the pen.

Thus in terms of economics, taste and behaviour, the Bodley Head as a firm prized the middle-class virtue of commercialism and profitability far higher than the Century Guild or Vale’s necessarily elitist *raison d’être* of Art for its own sake. This divide is indeed noted by Lambert and Ratcliffe, as they state that “stylish decadence [...] became the hallmark of The Bodley Head’s new enterprise” but that it was “by commercial rather than artistic or aesthetic impulse [that it became] shaped into a coherent voice, or rather chorus, of the Nineties.”<sup>365</sup> Indeed, the authors of The Bodley Head’s history go further in their appraisal of the “Yellow Nineties” concept, stating that John Lane’s legacy may be traced in the fact that “vulgar modern Bohemia had defeated the aesthetic niceties of Norman Shaw’s Redbrick arcadia in Bedford Park.”<sup>366</sup> It is very telling that Lambert and Ratcliffe chose Shaw as the embodiment of the Aesthetic movement which, in the 1890s, became supplanted in popular consciousness by decadence. Noble though this giant of architecture’s achievements may be, Mackmurdo, Horne and Image would appear to be far more

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<sup>364</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 22.

<sup>365</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 25.

<sup>366</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 91-2.

apposite a choice of contrast. This is especially the case as their work in the *Hobby Horse* set the agenda for the British Little Magazines, of which *The Yellow Book* is the most famed example, not to mention the Guild's central role in the genesis of the art nouveau book, with which The Bodley Head made its name.

The fact that *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* has received little in the way of critical attention to date obviously plays some part in Lambert and Ratcliffe's use of Shaw over the Century Guild. Another contributory factor may well be the perceived connections between the Guild and The Bodley Head, as the company issued *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* for a period, and published its replacement *The Hobby Horse* from 1893. However, as may be seen by a brief examination of the short-lived *Hobby Horse*, it did not belong in John Lane's stable.

It is recorded that the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* "died in a conflict of financial squalor,"<sup>367</sup> and the fact that "as late as 1900 Mackmurdo was still trying to recover money he claimed Horne owed him" from the venture,<sup>368</sup> demonstrates that the original magazine was produced in the "patron" manner, with Mackmurdo financially underwriting an aesthetic magazine that failed to make a profit. Indeed, when the new publication appeared for The Bodley Head, Horne was viewed as being its "editor-patron," re-affirming this singularly un-commercial quality in the magazine.<sup>369</sup> Fletcher's examination of Horne's architectural designs also emphasises this utter disregard for commercialism in matters of art: "As an architect, he was inclined, like Mackmurdo, to work regardless of cost, which explains why a

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<sup>367</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 114.

<sup>368</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 188.

<sup>369</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 60.

number of his buildings never transcended the drawing board.”<sup>370</sup> Horne’s artwork was essentially *acommercial*, to the degree that the very building itself – the reason for his putting pen to paper – comes second to the artistic rendering of the design. Such impenetrable beliefs in the value and importance of true Art would seem to be completely at odds with the rampant commercialism that defined The Bodley Head. However, in a pattern that was to become familiar to many aristocratic households in the twentieth century, by 1893 the beleaguered publishers of the *Hobby Horse* found themselves knocking on the door of their more financially secure middle-class counterparts, in order to remain afloat.

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<sup>370</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 56-7.

### 3.3 The Death of a Periodical: *The Hobby Horse* at The Bodley Head.

The New Series of the renamed *Hobby Horse* was heralded with a considerable degree of optimism. Herbert Horne engaged in a “lengthy correspondence” with Elkin Mathews over the preparations for a truly rejuvenated magazine. The *Hobby Horse* was redesigned in every aspect of its physical appearance, and in doing so, one may discern a move towards the commercialism of The Bodley Head. Horne requested that Mathews “have a special mould made for The Hobby Horse paper. There is one great advantage in this. We can then have a special water mark, which will increase its value in the eyes of collectors.”<sup>371</sup> Along with Horne’s bibliographic attempts towards commercialism, Mathews and Lane brought their considerable marketing experience to bear upon the launch, and the first issue was “carefully publicized” by the firm, which included the distribution of a prospectus boasting a singularly optimistic list of contributors. Alongside Laurence Binyon and Lionel Johnson, many old *Hobby Horse* contributors such as Ruskin, the Morrisises, Christina Rossetti and Simeon Solomon were to feature, as well as Ford Maddox Brown, Katharine Tynan and Oscar Wilde.<sup>372</sup> In actual fact, only Binyon and Solomon were to contribute from this impressive list. The prospectus also states that

The Magazine will continue to be published in quarterly numbers; and the price of subscription for the four numbers, commencing with the January number of each year, and including packing and postage, will be One Pound. Separate numbers will be issued only to subscribers. It has been necessary to raise the price of the Magazine, in order to publish what was formerly issued in a half-private manner, and without regard to loss; but, upon the other hand, the most scrupulous care will be expended upon the form and matter of the forthcoming series.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 303.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

Clearly, as Fletcher noted of the minor poets during the early 1890s, the *Hobby Horse* was attempting to make the transition from being a patronised publication to becoming a commercially viable entity. It is interesting to note the use of the transitional phrase “but, upon the other hand” between the notions of commercial viability and artistic merit, suggesting as it does a certain level of incongruity between the two concepts. However, the promise of “scrupulous care” in the “matter” of the magazine proved as unfounded as the advertised list of contributors. The reproductions of fine art that used to grace the Century Guild productions are severely curtailed (two in the first issue and only one each in the final two), and are not provided with separate, and separating sheets, but merely printed on one side of the paper, with text on the verso. The paper that was eventually used is far thinner than the Century Guild’s, and the “new type” smaller than the original, and more densely packed. Indeed, in many cases, the paper is so thin that the text from one side impedes the clarity of that on the other. Coupled with the drastically reduced margins, the New Series thus appears much darker, and more uniform upon first viewing, and consequently less enjoyable both to regard and to read. Many of these changes appear curious, given Nelson’s examination of the economics of The Bodley Head’s book production, or perhaps indicate a limit to the cost-effectiveness of such lavish book production. Nevertheless, the overriding difference between the two is that the *Hobby Horse* is much less a self-conscious work of art than its esteemed predecessor.

Examining the contents of the three issues of the New Series, this sense of entropy continues, as, having lost the missionary zeal given to the magazine by the now defunct Guild, much of the written work appears directionless, detached, inaccessible

in its specialisation, and, on occasion, quite trivial. Selwyn Image's two written items in the whole of the "series" stand in stark contrast to his wittily wrought social criticisms and satires that brought to life many a page in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*. Though "A Meditation for Christmas Day" (NS. I, 9) remains typical of his Anglo-Catholic poetry, his three-part essay, "A Ternary of Reflections" (NS. II, 43-50) lacks much of the potency and drive of his former work.

The first section, "Of Matthew Arnold, Inspector of Elementary Schools," begins with a typically Imagean critique of modern biography, taking a side-swipe at the "New Journalism," but for the most part remains little more than a sentimental trifle regarding an old friend, coupled with a justification for a forthcoming book of "Arnold's familiar letters" (NS. II, 44) – most probably Elkin Mathews reprinting of Arthur Galton's earlier *Hobby Horse* work, *Two Essays upon Matthew Arnold and Some of His Letters to the Author*, eventually published in 1897. The second section, "Of Certain Interleaved Volumes" merely reflects the environment of the *Hobby Horse*'s new home, being a meditation on the value of "Old Paper," and a whimsical musing on the current, fashionable trade in rare and rebound books. The final piece "I Like You, and Your Book, Ingenuous Hone" is yet another reflection on "dear old books," centred around William Hone's 1826 Dedication to Charles Lamb, yet it is memorable for its mentioning of "middle-class" as a derogatory term regarding literature, although Image himself refutes the use of such a term in describing Lamb's works (NS. II, 49).

What is clear from reading his letters is that at this point in his career, Image was far more focussed on the reception of his new font of Greek type. On May 15<sup>th</sup> 1892,

Image wrote to his brother John, in a state of some excitement, regarding Macmillans having approached him on the matter of “bringing out a new Greek type.”<sup>374</sup> In this letter, Image states his preference for tenth-century Greek writing, “out of all comparison the most beautiful there has ever been.” Image’s personal preference for tenth-century Greek had been expressed the year before, in an article by Alfred W. Pollard for the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*. Entitled “Some Remarks Upon the History of Greek Types and Upon the Reasons of their General Lack of Beauty,” Pollard singles out Image’s work, based on the tenth-century script, as being by far the best available (*CGHH* VI, xxiv, 132). In 1893, Image tells his brother

The Greek type prospers. We are bringing *some specimens of it out in the Hobby Horse, properly spaced on the page*, which will make all the difference to it in the world. *Louis Dyer*, who is good enough to be a great admirer of the said type, is writing a learned article to accompany the specimens [...] I think this performance in the *H. H.* may give the thing a good start, it will show it at its best, what it is really capable of.<sup>375</sup> (Image’s italics.)

Hence Image’s hopes for the article are focussed on it being an advertisement for his work, in its most advantageous setting. In this respect, the piece bears some similarity to Ricketts’ Vale Press Type, two pages of which were bound into number four of *The Dial* (1896), being a section of “The Most Pleasant and Delectable Tale of the Marriage of Cupid and Psyche, [sic]” facing page 28. The *Dial*’s example of a new type is interesting in that it is bound into the magazine as a separate sheet, as is all art work in the magazine, and the only indication as to its purpose is the title given on the contents page. The type is to be judged as a work of art in itself, without any argument or justification. Dyer’s work on Image’s Greek type, however, is a deeply involved scholastic examination of a variety of Greek fonts,

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<sup>374</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 75.

<sup>375</sup> Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 81. The type is mentioned again on page 86, as Image tells his brother that Morris’ Kelmscott Press edition of Swinburne is to be printed using it.



largely impenetrable to those without a background in either Greek texts or the printing trade. Though Dyer obviously views Image's font as aesthetically pleasing, the article represents a shift from the "Total Art" ethos of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, which might include an architect's technical drawings, or a wallpaper design as being self-justified works of art, or indeed the *Dial*'s offering of a type-face as an artistic work itself.

In this respect, Dyer's work on Image's Greek type is representative of much of the New Series of the *Hobby Horse*, in that each number is largely made up of substantial, largely historical studies within highly specialised areas of scholastic interest. This new direction can be attributed to the efforts of one man – the editor and chief contributor, Herbert Horne. Reflecting upon Fritz Saxl's account of Horne, Ian Fletcher proposes that the two sides of Horne's character, "the voluptuary and the precision," were to become "finally and fruitfully united in the passionately accurate scholarship of his last years."<sup>376</sup> It is this refocusing of Horne's interests from his earlier passions that is most evident within the pages of the Bodley Head *Hobby Horse*, as is manifest in both the articles Horne wrote himself, and his choices of others' works as editor. His editorial selections speak for themselves, in terms of their specialised and somewhat dry nature, including as they do A. J. Hipkins' "The Musical Instruments of the Angels, Represented in Early Italian Paintings in the National Gallery" (NS. I, 10), "The Consort Viols, the Viol d'Amore, the Lyra Viol, and the Viola da Gamba," which none but a skilled musician with an avid devotion to historical instruments may fully appreciate, by Arnold Dolmetsch (NS. II, 51), and finally Dyer's article in number three.

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<sup>376</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 3-4.

The remaining essays, representing the most significant articles in the series, are all penned by Horne himself. His “Essay in the Life of Inigo Jones, Architect” is split over the first two numbers (NS. I, 22 & II, 64) and in both cases takes up almost half of the total number of pages in the magazine. “The Venture of Sir Balthasar Gerbier, Knight, Sometime Master of the Ceremonies to King Charles the First; Cap. I”<sup>377</sup> dwarfs the other two literary articles in number three, being Dyer’s article and three poems by Dowson. As may be seen from the article titles, Horne’s subjects match his preoccupations from the pages of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, namely the court of Charles the First, and specifically the English architects of that era (Gerbier also worked as an architect; we are told that he “set himself up, at one time, as a rival to Inigo Jones” NS. III, 97).

However, the writer’s personal, socio-political bias, and the perennial use of his subject matter in the defence of Art in the previous magazine, is no longer present. Though beginning with the statement that artists “flourished in England during the reign of Charles the First,” (ibid) neither this article on Gerbier, nor both those upon the life of Jones, dwell upon the Protestant Reformation and its disastrous effect upon the arts. The Gerbier article mentions that in 1645, the House of Commons decreed that “all pictures and statues without superstition be forthwith sold [...] and that all pictures having the representation of the Second Person of the Trinity, or the Virgin Mary, be forthwith burned,” but this is recounted in a strictly impartial, matter-of-fact way, with the author concluding that “neither of these orders appears to have been exactly carried out” (NS. III, 113). The Gerbier article is interesting in

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<sup>377</sup> This article was to be continued in the fourth number of the New Series, which never appeared.

that it would appear to represent Horne's inspiration for his previous "Adam Legendre" articles, as a great deal of Legendre's exploits match those of this genuine historical character. However, in isolation, this article is a detached, impartial historical account of an overlooked seventeenth-century gentleman, and nothing more.

Similarly, the two articles on Jones are supremely impartial. The articles are utterly devoid of any "editorial" comment, such as his rabidly anti-Protestant views which coloured his previous writings on Jones, and Charles' reign in general. From the outset, Horne displays his meticulous first-hand archival scholarship, quoting at length from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents, such as Jones' father's debts, family wills (NS. I, 25-7) and several quite laborious documents detailing specific building projects' required materials and subsequent costs (NS. I, 38-9). The only, indirect reference to the seismic upheaval that was the English Civil War and the subsequent Puritan control of the country, is the dispassionate and necessary recounting of the fact that many of Jones' records are missing for works "before the Restoration" (NS. II, 69).

The first instalment of his article on Jones is introduced as being an attempt towards a thorough and scholarly biography of the architect, and Horne informs his readers, no doubt as an indicator of his own achievements in this area, that "An imperfect summary" of his writings on Jones thus far "has been printed in the Dictionary of National Biography" (NS. I, 23). Horne's work in the *Hobby Horse* has therefore altered distinctly from a heavily biased view of Charles' reign and the subsequent rise of Puritanism (wherein the writer used historical events as a quasi-scholarly

underpinning to his ire against the contemporary nineteenth-century view of art and morality) to being pure, detached and impartial historical research, worthy of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Hence, within the Bodley Head *Hobby Horse*, one may indeed discern a distinct shift from his early, passionate and pejorative accounts of England's transitions during the seventeenth century within the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, to the "passionately accurate scholarship of his last years," culminating with his masterwork, *Alessandro Filipepi, Commonly Called Sandro Botticelli, Painter, of Florence* (1908) which remains a standard biographical account of the artist, almost a century later.

As the article on Gerbier is unfinished, it is possible to speculate that this account of the knight's later existence would span the Civil Wars and give Horne cause to criticise Protestantism once more, but on the basis of his articles in the three extant copies of the magazine, this seems highly unlikely; Horne's, and by extension, the *Hobby Horse*'s, transition towards dry, scholarly workmanship is complete.

Ian Fletcher also notes that the over-riding influence on this later series is "Horne's archival, architectural and typographical concerns," and reflects on the fact that "The only 'decadent' items are the three poems and a short story by Dowson, and one of Verlaine's later inferior religious poems."<sup>378</sup> Dowson's poetry is indeed a highlight of the series, featuring as it does "Benedictio Domini," discussed earlier, alongside "A Requiem" – a ghostly, flower-strewn tale of lost love and the welcome sleep of death – and the tantalising web of desire spun from the accidental touch of a woman "once, in passing by" in "Terre Promise" (NS. III, 81). However it is his short story

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<sup>378</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 188.

“The Statute of Limitations” (NS. I, 2), rightfully placed as the flagship article in the New Series, which, as well as being the only example of creative prose in the series, is without question the most innovative work therein.

The decadent trope of morbidity suffuses this tale of an imperial merchant whose brooding over the picture of his young betrothed finally forces him to suicide, on account of their fifteen-year separation having supplanted the girl he loved with a woman he has never met. Like Des Esseintes, shut up in his artificial world, Michael Garth’s life is dominated by his brooding, morbid imagination, where the imagined becomes a replacement for any and all possible realities. As with so many of Dowson’s decadent anti-heroes, Garth mirrors the passions of his creator, having fallen in love with a child: The fateful photograph describes

the charming, oval face of a young girl, little more than a child, with great eyes, that one guessed, one knew not why, to be the colour of violets, looking out with singular wistfulness from a waving cloud of dark hair. (NS. I, 2.)

However, the arrival of a new photograph, years later, causes Garth to reflect on the transition from childhood into womanhood. In a philosophy reminiscent of Ronald Pearsall’s “Cult of the Little Girl,” the image of the child becomes a substitute, or even rival to the mature woman, with whom a sexual relationship would be possible.<sup>379</sup> The beloved’s initial, pre-sexual status is highlighted as Dowson clearly states, “the girl was very young: there was no question of an early marriage” (NS. I, 4). This fact, added to the poverty of the lover, spurs Garth on to an imperial career,

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<sup>379</sup> Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Pelican-Penguin, 1971) 430-46. Fraser Harrison also analyses similar tropes in art and literature in his chapters “The Fear of Women” (7, 117-133) and “[P. Wilson] Steer” (8, 134-154). Indeed, noting Steer’s “preoccupation with pubescent girls” rather than adults, Harrison remarks “he did differ from his more morbid contemporaries, Ernest Dowson for example, in portraying his nymphets in their gayest mood.” Harrison, *The Dark Angel* 136.

but as well as amassing wealth, the intervening years enable him to divorce his child-love from the reality of her adult person utterly: “The notion of the woman, which now she was, came between him and the girl he had loved, whom he still loved with a passion, and separated them” (NS. I, 6).

In a feature fraught with notions of a repressed sexuality, the maturation of the girl into a woman is here likened to death – the young girl is literally killed by the arrival of the mature woman: “Only the girl I loved; it’s as if she had died. Yes, she is dead, as dead as Helen [...] Our marriage will be a ghastly mockery: a marriage of corpses.” (NS. I, 7.) Such notions are typically decadent in their fusing of love, perverted sexuality and death, intensified and transfigured by the fevered obsessions of a morbid imagination.

However, Dowson’s story manifests other literary characteristics which only add to its depth and vibrancy, when compared to the cold, dry scholasticism of so much that surrounds the story. The tale is suffused with identifiably Modernist tropes, most notably a reversal of the values of stereotypical Victorian love-stories, which would have the young lovers estranged by adversity, and through a series of life-enriching trials, lead them a final, permanent union and a “happy ever after.” Such a linear love story is rejected by Dowson, as time here represents regression and a moving away from the ideal state, not one towards it. Rather than the trials set before Garth leading to a fully-rounding of his character, both Garth himself and his beloved are seen to fragment and decay in this morbid philosophy of time, and the Victorian value of constancy in love is turned on its head:

Her heart, how can she give it to me? She gave it years ago to the man I was, the man who is dead. We, who are left, are nothing to one another, mere strangers [...] her constancy [has] given her the one rival, with whom she [can] never compete: the memory of her old self, of her gracious girlhood, which [is] dead. (NS. I, 7-8).

The Victorian family building blocks of steadfast devotion in the woman and a dedication to financial betterment in the man are displayed as leading to psychological trauma and ultimately death, instead of an harmonious and lasting resolution. Awash on a tide of endlessly disjointed time, Garth finally jumps from the ship on his homeward journey, and Dowson-the-poet spins this analogy of time as water, closing his narrative with a description of Garth's final wish:

he chose to drop down, fathoms down, into the calm, irrecoverable depths of the Atlantic, when he did, bearing with him at last an unspoilt ideal, and leaving her a memory, that experience could never tarnish, nor custom stale. (NS. I, 8.)

Such imagery has much in the way of literary precursors, from De Quincey's "Roman clepsydra" in his "Suspiria de Profundis" (1845),<sup>380</sup> back to Heraclitus' ever-renewing river of time.<sup>381</sup> Furthermore, Dowson's tale of misdirected imperial capitalism, morbid philosophising and a sea-borne deconstruction of selfhood in many ways looks forward to that milestone in Modernist literature, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899).

The first similarity the two tales share is the use of a frame-narrative to tell the tale of their imperial merchant, tragic heroes. Although Conrad compounds this technique with the use of the un-named narrator recounting Marlow's tale, Dowson's earlier, sea-fairing tale-within-a-tale-told matches Conrad's later technique. Furthermore,

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<sup>380</sup> Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings*, ed. Barry Milligan. Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2003) 166.

<sup>381</sup> See fragment 21, Philip Wheelwright, *Heraclitus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP-Sandpiper, 1999) 29.

both Conrad's Marlow and Dowson's narrator become the accidental custodians of their imperial acquaintances' memory, Kurtz and Garth respectively. Both take the literary remains of the men they met back to their betrothed ladies in England, and both lie to them regarding the manner of their beloved's death: "I kept a secret from her, my private interpretation of the accident of his death." (NS. I, 8.) Although Marlow's lie – "The last word he pronounced was – your name" –<sup>382</sup> has a greater psychological impact upon the liar (in some respects, the whole of *Heart of Darkness* may be seen as a tale told in order to justify the lie), both narrators deceive the beloved as to the true, horrific nature of their intended husbands' tortured mental state, as the tellers believe the lie to be more fitting than the truth, within an English setting.

Like the ultimate darkness and disease-ridden madness of Conrad's "inner station," Garth's domain is set within the "pestilential stew" of "the interior" (NS. I, 3). However, the greatest similarity within the texts relates to the characters of Kurtz and Michael Garth themselves. As Kurtz represents for Marlow a problem to be solved, so too does Dowson's narrator perceive Garth: "As our acquaintance advanced, it took (his character, I mean) more and more the aspect of a difficult problem in psychology, that I was passionately interested in solving." (NS. I, 2.) Just as the enigmatic Kurtz is pieced together from rumour and chance meeting, such as with the Russian "harlequin," Garth's "singular character" is "gathered from hints, which he let drop [...] I guessed more, however, than he told me; and what was lacking, I pieced together later, from the girl to whom I broke the news of his death." (Ibid.)

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<sup>382</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Paul O'Prey. Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) 121.



The two men share great success in their imperial endeavours; the “remarkable” Kurtz “Sends in as much ivory as all the others put together,”<sup>383</sup> and to his predecessor Garth, his business (undefined “metal” trading) became “a second nature to him [...] He made money lavishly [...] all his operations were successful, even those, which seemed the wildest gambling” (NS. I, 4). Kurtz’s apparent grounding in the humanities, manifest in his skill as a painter, and his “greatest gift [...] his eloquence,”<sup>384</sup> is also a characteristic of Garth:

Morose, reticent, unsociable as he had become, he had still, I discovered by degrees, a leaning towards the humanities, a nice taste such as can only be the result of much knowledge, in the fine things of literature [...] In his rare moments of amiability, he could talk on such matters with *verve* and originality (NS. I, 3).

This image of Garth as a dark, obsessive man, yet one who might suddenly enlighten his listeners with flashes of intellectual brilliance, matches the “harlequin’s” staccato portrait of his idol, Kurtz, exactly.

Finally, Marlow’s philosophising in the wake of his dealings with Kurtz, and which is the dominant thread throughout the novella, is also present in “The Statute of Limitations,” as the narrator is given cause to dwell upon Garth’s life and death, after delivering his message to the woman. Reflecting upon Garth’s insistence upon calling his fortune in his imperial adventures “luck,” the narrator muses

When the first shock of his death was past, I could feel that it was after all a solution: with his “luck” to handicap him, he had perhaps avoided worse things than the death he met. For the luck of such a man, is it not his temperament, his character? Can anyone escape from that? (NS. I, 8.)

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<sup>383</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 47.

<sup>384</sup> Paul O’Prey, in his introduction, Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 20.

Such a theorising over the effects of the man's "character" finds echoes in Marlow's reflection that in Kurtz, there was always "something wanting in him," a fatal, tragic flaw which would inevitably bring about his eventual ruin.

There is indeed reason to suppose that Dowson and Conrad were aware of one another's works, and their short stories in particular. The two men contributed stories to *The Savoy* in 1896: number six, October, includes work by both. Conrad and Dowson were part of a larger circle of moderately fashionable short-story writers, publishing their works in the various periodicals of the 1890s.<sup>385</sup> Although the *Hobby Horse* would appear to have never enjoyed a particularly wide readership, the fact that "The Statute of Limitations" was republished many times, the first in 1895 by Elkin Mathews in the collection *Dilemmas: Stories and Studies in Sentiment*, adds to the supposition that Conrad did indeed read Dowson's tale, and was greatly influenced by it in the creation of his most famous work.

However, this ground-breaking link with great Modernist literature stands in isolation amidst the pages of the ailing *Hobby Horse*. The arrival of *The Yellow Book* "was fateful in the careers of so many," and according to Nelson, "was the immediate cause of the breakup of the early Bodley Head."<sup>386</sup> It may also be seen as heralding the final demise of the *Hobby Horse*, almost exactly ten years after its first publication by the brightly optimistic, though certainly commercially naïve, Century Guild. Determined to hold on to the more profitable publications, the "avant-garde, the more bizarre items from the Bodley Head catalogue without exception continued

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<sup>385</sup> Indeed, *Heart of Darkness* was first serialised in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, between March and April 1899.

<sup>386</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 271.

under Lane's banner."<sup>387</sup> This aspect of the split is illustrated by Nelson thus: "For example, Lane kept the *Yellow Book* while Mathews kept the *Hobby Horse*," displaying the fact that Lane, in his bid to take all of the more profitable authors and publications with him, did not view the *Hobby Horse* as either commercially viable, or "avant-garde" enough to add kudos to his new firm.<sup>388</sup>

Despite Ernest Radford's bold assurance to Mathews, in the wake of this uneven division of assets, that "The Hobby Horse is worth 10000 Yellow Books,"<sup>389</sup> by the time Mathews inherited the periodical, it was all but dead. The final Inventory Sheets of the Bodley Head partnership show that the "*Hobby Horse* Parts I & II" were already in stock, while the third and fourth were "Under contract."<sup>390</sup> Mathews was only to publish one, final issue, number III, and that was an extremely poor relation to even its predecessors in the New Series. As well as Lane's decision reflecting the fact that the periodical was not a commercial success, the contributors to the *Hobby Horse* themselves seem to have given up on the venture. The first number of the New Series shows eight items in the index, the second has six, and the third and final, the sole issue to be published by Mathews alone, only four. The sense of entropy that had begun with the split from Mackmurdo and the dissolution of the Century Guild reached its inevitable conclusion after the split between Mathews and Lane. Selwyn Image's announcement of the *Hobby Horse*'s demise illustrates quite clearly that the magazine had finally run dry: "Yes, the Hobby-Horse comes shortly to an end. It is wise, I think, that it should. It has done its work, and

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<sup>387</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 274.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid. Nelson also demonstrates how the Rhymers sided with Mathews, many of whom were allied to the *Hobby Horse* circle, and the fact that, in many ways, the *Hobby Horse* was fashioned more in Mathews' image than Lane's. See chapter 8, "The Breakup," 266-279.

<sup>389</sup> Cited Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 278.

<sup>390</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 324.

has told in certain directions, so we shall bury it without tears.”<sup>391</sup> Though having made its influential mark, the attempted shift from being a patronised publication to a commercially viable one had failed. The tale of the *Hobby Horse* was finally at an end.

The closing accounts of the Bodley Head partnership do not give any indication of the numbers of the *Hobby Horse* produced, and J. R. Tye’s checklist of periodicals makes no distinction between the Century Guild and Bodley Head magazines in his citing of Mackmurdo’s claim that the circulation “never quite reached 500 subscribers.”<sup>392</sup> The Bodley Head version did enjoy a brief transatlantic existence due to the firm’s American expansion, but this does not appear to have greatly affected sales. Throughout the global rare book market of the twenty-first century, the *Hobby Horse* is an uncommon find indeed, but the original 1884 “No. 1” and the three New Series numbers are by far the rarest, suggesting that the uniform, seven-volume annual set of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* was the most popular of this short-run periodical.

Nevertheless, many of the writers, artists and ideas of this significant body of work survived the protracted end of the Century Guild’s public voice, survived the split between the Bodley Head’s founders, and found a new lease of life after another seismic shift in the world of *fin-de-siècle* British literature sparked by the trials of Oscar Wilde.

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<sup>391</sup> Letter to his brother, John, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1894. Mackmurdo, ed., *Selwyn Image: Letters* 86.

<sup>392</sup> Tye, *Periodicals of the Nineties* 3.

### 3.4 *The Yellow Book* - the Real Chameleon.

In her work *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow Nineties* (1941), Frances Winwar gives an account of the *Yellow Book*'s three-year existence, and musing over the decline in quality of the magazine, following Beardsley's departure, she writes

Long before it ceased, the qualities of daring that had distinguished it at its inception had submitted to such modification that by the end it differed little from the literary magazines which sprang up to imitate it in the course of the 'nineties – the *Pageant*, the *Hobby Horse*, the *Dome*.<sup>393</sup>

Although inaccurate, this statement does provide an interesting starting point for any study of the magazine. Alongside the temporal problems of the *Hobby Horse* (1884-94) being founded an entire decade before the *Yellow Book*, and the *Pageant* (1896-7) being a sister-publication to *The Dial*, first published in 1889, Winwar's book suggests that such publications had little or nothing in common with the "daring" aspects found in the first four issues of Lane's in-house periodical. As has been clearly demonstrated so far, both the *Hobby Horse* and the *Dial* published much in the way of covert and overtly subversive, daring matter; and as shall be demonstrated below, the *Yellow Book* actually falls short of matching its predecessors in this, and other, respects.

What *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow Nineties* portrays, however, is the fact that the *Yellow Book* is the most famous of the Little Magazines and had the biggest impact upon contemporary society, when compared to the earlier periodicals. Winwar's

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<sup>393</sup> Frances Winwar, *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow 'Nineties*, Foreword by Lord Alfred Douglas (New York: Blue Ribbon, 1941) 244.

mistake is in the presumption that the most popular must have been the first, and the “best.” But of the *Yellow Book*’s popularity, there can be little dispute, unless, that is, one attempts to define the precise scope of the magazine’s production. The official records state that of the first issue, 5,000 copies were initially printed, and, having sold out in five days, another two editions, both of 1,000 copies each were rushed out.<sup>394</sup> Nelson cites the Bodley Head’s final Inventory Sheet in support of these figures, and also states that volume II also sold 5,000,<sup>395</sup> but no further editions were required. Thus compared to the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*’s humble <500, or the *Dial*’s 200, the *Yellow Book* is indeed a giant. Yet these numbers are not entirely accurate. Norman Denny, writing “in the interests of truth” on behalf of a “later generation at the Bodley Head” claims that “All the volumes were reprinted. They were, however, not sold to the trade in the ordinary way, but were circulated by what can only be described as irregular methods and passed off as first editions.”<sup>396</sup> A great many copies of the *Yellow Book* are in existence which bear “second” and “third edition” statements under the publisher’s details on the front cover, in addition to the unspecified number of those masquerading as firsts. Furthermore, Katherine Mix asserts that the entire run of the *Yellow Book* was reprinted in 1928 by Sotherans, and that the only means of distinguishing between these and Lane’s originals is that the latter had the publisher’s adverts in the rear, whereas the 1928 reprints do not.<sup>397</sup> Yet even this method of differentiating between the reprints and originals is far from conclusive, as there are many Bodley Head editions of the

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<sup>394</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 62.

<sup>395</sup> Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 322-3.

<sup>396</sup> Norman Denny, *The Yellow Book: A Selection* (London: Bodley Head, 1949) fifth unnumbered page, “Selector’s Note.”

<sup>397</sup> Katherine Lyon Mix, *A Study in Yellow: The Yellow Book and Its Contributors* (Lawrence: U of Kansas P, 1960) 275.

complete run which also lack the adverts.<sup>398</sup> Hence it is impossible to assess, with anything approaching accuracy, the exact number of *Yellow Books* published by the Bodley Head. All one can be certain of is that it was a great many thousand copies in total.

Wedded to this, the *Yellow Book* was cheap – five shillings for a periodical of “at least 250 pages,”<sup>399</sup> and occasionally more than 400. This was the same price as the New Series of the *Hobby Horse*, but offering between six and ten times the content; and an annual subscription to the *Yellow Book* was still less than the cost of a single copy of *The Dial*. Along with Lane’s enviable marketing prowess, which by 1894 had established the firm as the leading publisher and seller of *belles lettres*, the success of the *Yellow Book*, as the most popular *avant garde* periodical of the day, was all but ensured. Though many writers view the *Yellow Book* as being uncommercial in its refusal to include advertising other than publisher’s lists,<sup>400</sup> its success was a fully commercial success, as Ian Fletcher has noted: “In literary history, [*The Yellow Book*] is always *the* magazine of the 1890s. Yet it represents the point where the format and accent of earlier periodicals was taken up into commercial publishing.”<sup>401</sup> Hence, in light of the present study’s analysis of the earlier periodicals, Fletcher’s two statements are co-dependent – the *Yellow Book* owes its reputation to its commercialism and success in the market place, rather than standing aloof in terms of quality of content, or value of any perceived message.

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<sup>398</sup> This has been established by the present author, as the set held in Durham University archives lacks the publisher’s adverts, but shares the change in paper quality at volume VIII with originals which include the adverts. It is highly unlikely that any subsequent reprints by another company would be able to replicate this change in paper sources.

<sup>399</sup> Publishing contract between Lane and Mathews as publishers and Henry Harland and Aubrey Beardsley for the production of the *Yellow Book*, signed on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1894. John Lane Archive (photocopies), UCE, Birmingham. The *Yellow Book* File 1.

<sup>400</sup> For example, see Mix, *Study in Yellow* 275.

<sup>401</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 192.

As Winwar's book demonstrates, any message or social comment made by those earlier magazines has been largely drowned out by the voice of the *Yellow Book*. Nevertheless, as the magazine's and Oscar Wilde's fortunes, and subsequent reputations, are so intimately bound together in historical memory, it is necessary to delineate quite clearly the differences between the *Yellow Book* and those periodicals in the tradition of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*.

Much of the disparity between these two strands of the British periodical world at the *fin de siècle* is as a direct result of the *Yellow Book*'s popular, and populist stance. Whereas the Century Guild published works and arguments aimed towards the reassertion of the importance of the craftsman over the tradesman and philistine, in matters of art, and *The Dial* developed this defence of the artist's realm into a more closeted, elitist domain, the prospectus for the first *Yellow Book* states that –

The aim of the Publishers and Editors of THE YELLOW BOOK is to depart as far as may be from the bad old traditions of periodical literature, and to provide an Illustrated Magazine which shall be beautiful as a piece of bookmaking, modern and distinguished in its letterpress and its pictures, and withal popular in the better sense of the word. It is felt that such a Magazine, at present, is conspicuous by its absence.<sup>402</sup>

Hence the primary function of the *Yellow Book*, in publishing terms, is to “fill a gap” in the literary periodical market. He continues, “It will publish no serials; but its complete stories will sometimes run to a considerable length in themselves. Thus the

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<sup>402</sup> Henry Harland, Aubrey Beardsley, John Lane and Elkin Mathews, “Announcement: The Yellow Book: An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume I April, 1894.” *The 1890s Hypermedia Archive: The Yellow Book Project*. 1 May 2007. <<http://www.ryerson.ca/1890s/yellowbookadvert.htm>>



tiresome ‘choppy’ effect of so many magazines will be avoided.”<sup>403</sup>

Notwithstanding this commercial aspect of the magazine’s inception, Harland’s insistence on the quality of the book itself, not to mention the publisher’s renown for *belles lettres*, places it alongside the forerunners of the art nouveau magazine. But far from espousing any defence of Art, the Artist, or any social movement such as “aestheticism” or “decadence,” the *Yellow Book*’s *raison d’être* as here stated, is simply its own success in the market place, as a beautifully made, literary and artistic periodical.

That is not to say that the *Yellow Book* is devoid of decadent work. Beardsley’s cover illustration for volume one is certainly suggestive of vice – a leering youth peering over the shoulder of a voluptuous older woman, the two both masked and half hidden in candle-light – as is the very yellow cover itself.<sup>404</sup> This sense of expectation was extended into the marketing for *The Yellow Book* and at every stage was carefully managed by Lane. An irony-laden review in the *National Observer* clearly demonstrates Lane’s exertions in matters of marketing:

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid. This was, however, not a unique feature in the periodical market. *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* (1868-1915), first publisher of *Dorian Gray*, published complete tales of approximately 50,000 words, and this was “its most distinctive feature.” Though an American owned publication, from 1890 it was simultaneously produced and circulated in both the UK and US. See *CWOW*, III, xvi.

<sup>404</sup> Fletcher notes that the colour was associated with “scrofulous French novels, railway yellow-backs [known for salacious content], and the menace of the yellow east.” See Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 192. Joseph Bristow confirms that the *Yellow Book*’s “striking colour exploited the scandalous connotations of racy French novels printed between yellow covers” (*CWOW*, III, xx). Indeed there was a pornographic work of 1656 entitled *The Yellow Book*, concerning a brothel keeper named “Mrs Wanton.” The work is cited briefly in Roger Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1979) 181. Although there is no evidence to support the idea that any of Lane’s colleagues were specifically referring to this lewd seventeenth-century work when naming the periodical, the book’s existence displays the connection between the idea of a yellow book and risqué content, two and a half centuries prior to the Bodley Head’s *Yellow Book*. (I am indebted to Professor John Manning for drawing this work to my attention.)

for it had been foretold that on that day [April 15<sup>th</sup> 1894] a new planet – a star of modernity, a yellow asteroid, in fact – should swim into the ken of the nation which hitherto had sat in the most lamentable darkness. Never was the way of a magazine made so plain before it as the *Yellow Book*'s; judicious advertisements planted, and injudicious interviews watered.<sup>405</sup>

This astrological analogy was recapitulated by J. Lewis May in his memoirs, stating that the full-window display at the Bodley Head created “such a mighty glow of yellow at the far end of Vigo Street that one might have been forgiven for imagining for a moment that some awful portent had happened, and that the sun had risen in the West!”<sup>406</sup> However, Lane's clarion call, aimed at (and succeeding in) making his new venture a commercial success, gives the illusion of a unity of purpose within the magazine itself, as well as without.

Though Harland declares that the magazine shall not “tremble at the frown of Mrs. Grundy,” the *Yellow Book* shows no consistency in opposing bourgeois sentiments, unlike the fundamentally anti-bourgeois stances of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* and *The Dial*. There are, undeniably, aspects of the magazine which bare the hallmarks of typically decadent art and literature. Beardsley's art has always defined the 'nineties decadent movement, and alongside his work in the first volume, Arthur Symons' “Stella Maris” (*Yellow Book* I, 129) and Max Beerbohm's parody “A Defence of Cosmetics” (*Yellow Book* I, 65) are undeniably decadent in that they both represent a virtual homage to Baudelaire,<sup>407</sup> and both received a thorough lambasting

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<sup>405</sup> Cited Mix, *Study in Yellow* 87. Most critical works cite a wide range of reviews for the first issue of the *Yellow Book*, all of them negative. For an overview, see Fraser Harrison, ed., *The Yellow Book: An Anthology* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1982) 9.

<sup>406</sup> J. Lewis May, *John Lane and the Nineties* (London: Bodley Head, 1936) 74.

<sup>407</sup> Symons' erotic poetry is widely held to be in the tradition of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, and it would appear that Beerbohm was greatly influenced by Baudelaire's “*Éloge du Maquillage*” for his inaugural piece for the *Yellow Book*. See Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne, ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 2006) 31.

by the bourgeois press on account of their representing moral degradation.<sup>408</sup>

However, these few decadent rosebuds, or the trailing scent of “‘patchouli’ Symons,”<sup>409</sup> are not enough to perfume the entirety of the magazine – even during its heyday before Wilde’s arrest.

The backbone of the *Yellow Book*, as Harland suggested in the prospectus, was the New Writer’s short story. Winnie Chan notes that “Though Harland and the writers published in the *Yellow Book* did not invent the short story, they certainly carried on as if they did.”<sup>410</sup> What becomes clear after only a very brief examination of these works is a profound similarity in theme and tone. The tone is essentially melodramatic and the content distinctly repetitive, particularly in the early volumes. The stories, whether written by men or women, largely revolve around a young New Writer and his love life, very often involving an American woman, and situated in either London or Paris.<sup>411</sup> More often than not, the affair will be a troubled one, and almost universally, be the ending tragic or comic, the final sentence leaves the tale open – a glance, a turn of the head or a touch of the hand stands in the stead of uttered ascent or refusal. These “mood” pieces define much of the *Yellow Book*, and the self-obsessed nature of much of the work – writers writing about writers – gives the magazine overall quite a self-congratulatory, or even onanistic quality.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Virtually all works which deal with the *Yellow Book* detail the reaction to these articles in particular. For example, see Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 193-4, Harrison, ed., *The Yellow Book* 9.

<sup>409</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 193.

<sup>410</sup> Winnie Chan, *The Economy of the Short Story in British Periodicals of the 1890s*, *Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2007) 58.

<sup>411</sup> Chan concurs that much of the writing within the *Yellow Book* as a whole is “fraught with self-interest.” *Ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> Here *The Yellow Book* may be seen to be reflecting, or indeed contributing to the popularity of the “literary gossip column” in the popular press, highlighted by Mix, *Study in Yellow* 34.

In this respect, Henry James' "The Death of the Lion" is rightfully placed as the opening piece in the first volume, as the tale is a virtual parody of the environs of its own publication. Set amongst a whirl of authors and divorcées, "Death of the Lion" features a publisher who is portrayed as being distinctly similar to Lane:

Mr Pinhorn had the supreme shrewdness of recognizing from time to time the cases in which an article was not too bad only because it was too good, [sic]<sup>413</sup> There was nothing he loved so much as to print on the right occasion a thing he hated. (*Yellow Book* I, 11.)

The decadent writers around Lane are also lampooned quite pointedly, as the author, "Paraday," is depicted as a sick man, whose friend, on the subject of the mortality of authors, spouts such Wildean, humorously paradoxical pearls as "Dead – *passe encore*; there's nothing so safe. One never knows what a living author may do – one has mourned so many. However, one must make the worst of it; you must be as dead as you can." (*Yellow Book* I, 15.) The notion of the Bodley Head representing a literary counterpart to "the deliciously notorious bars, such favourites of Vigo Street writers [...] the Alhambra or the Empire,"<sup>414</sup> is also played upon by James, as his tale includes a "journal of the highest renown" named "The Empire" (*Ibid*). The fashion for cross-gendered pen names, and the popularity of Huysmans' *A Rebours* amongst the decadents, are both wonderfully caricatured in the male writer "Dora Forbes" and his work "*The Other Way Round*" (*Yellow Book* I, 20). The comedy is crowned by the fact that the American girl in this tale is an annoyingly persistent autograph-hunter, aptly named "Fanny Hurter."

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<sup>413</sup> This mistake in punctuation is one of a great many typographical errors in the first volume, which go some way to challenging the prospectus' assurances of quality.

<sup>414</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 100.

James' deft and witty farce is certainly one of the more amusingly wrought pieces, but the theme of the writer-as-subject is repeated in no less than five more stories in volume one alone. This self-obsessed aspect of much of the written work continues throughout the volumes, and is compounded by the artistic series "Bodley Heads," instituted in volume IV, where artists such as Will Rothenstein and Walter Sickert, and in later volumes Francis Howard and E. A. Walton, contribute portraits of the writers and artists within the Bodley Head as subject matter for the Bodley Head's own publication.

Although the subject of love, marriage and sexual fidelity is a common, if not omnipresent theme in many short stories, the actual morality within these tales varies wildly. For example, in volume IV, the Parisian tale of "The Bohemian Girl" (*Yellow Book* IV, 12) by Henry Harland, tells of a "Woman Who Did," being brought up by a free-thinking father on the *Rive Gauche*: "It was a queer life for a girl to live, that happy-go-lucky life of the Latin Quarter, lawless and unpremeditated, with a café for her schoolroom, and none but men for comrades; but Nina liked it." (*Yellow Book* IV, 21). Fighting every sexual prejudice, she is independent, confident, sexually active outside of wedlock, a single mother, and becomes a successful businesswoman. Upon having made her fortune by early middle age, she sells her boarding house, invests the money, and sets out upon ten years "of barefaced pleasure" as her honest reward for hard work. (*Yellow Book* IV, 43.) As with much of Harland's writing, the tale is quite daring in its strident opposition to bourgeois social mores. It is also one of the very few items to make reference to the sexual act itself, quite directly. Musing upon her choice of the seemingly dull Brazilian miner, Ernest "Coco" Mayer, as partner, Harland's alter ego

suggests to her friends and admirers, “Perhaps Coco [...] has luminous qualities that we don’t dream of, to which he gives reign when they’re *à deux*” (*Yellow Book* IV, 37). Indeed, this remark is certainly one of the most directly salacious sentences in the *Yellow Book* as a whole.

Hence Harland’s spicy tale bares a great many of the hallmarks that would define the work as “decadent” in the contemporary, popular sense of the word. The setting is French, as are the morals, if one is to side with Horsley’s various Matrons. As a didactic work, it attacks the Victorian notions of family values, social responsibility and patriarchy, and in its telling it is unashamedly sexually suggestive.

Such themes and attitudes are ones commonly attached to the *Yellow Book* as a whole, however the very next story, “The House of Shame” by H. B. Marriott Watson, displays a moral framework diametrically opposed to that of Harland’s tale of sexual liberation and free love. Watson’s story begins in a dark, middle-class London home, seething with remorse, typically Protestant guilt, and shame. The husband suffers under the weight of some barely mentionable sin which he must confess to his wife, for whom his passion has long since “cooled” (*Yellow Book* IV, 62), as she reflects upon the plight of the poor prostitutes who are forced to walk the winter streets (*Yellow Book* IV, 60). The wife is timid, probably pregnant and afraid of death, and her innocence necessitates his spelling out, word by anguished word, his infidelity with a prostitute, who was a former lover before his marriage. The wife screams, collapses, and then remains in a comatose state for the rest of the tale. Doctors come and go, muttering such plaintive, and singularly bourgeois, circumlocutory warnings as “she is very delicate,” and it being “a dangerous time,”

and warning that “one can’t be too careful in these affairs” (*Yellow Book* IV, 71). The ways of woman are represented in an atmosphere of closeted and unknowable fragility that is the precise opposite of Harland’s free and open New Woman; as the husband seeks for reassurance and some solid diagnosis, the doctor can merely reply, in tones weighed down with melodrama, “These things are never certain” (*Yellow Book* IV, 73). In the final paragraph, the wife opens her eyes to see her “polluted” husband at her side, which brings about a look of panic-stricken, abject horror on her face, and the un-stated inference which closes the tale is that the mere sight of the beast which she once took for her husband, has killed her in one stroke (*Yellow Book* IV, 78-9). Although the tale contains veiled references to sexual deviation, the moral framework which underpins the story is essentially middle-class and puritanical: sex is to be restricted to wedlock; woman is a fragile, angelic and mysterious creature, unknowable to man; and the wages of sin is death.

If the *Yellow Book* is to be said to have a singular “voice” of its own, then it is not to be found in its stance on morality: some works oppose bourgeois sentiments, others reinforce them. Although bound together in the same, yellow-backed edition, these two stories are emblematic of the considerable disparity in morality and value structures as one moves from item to item within the confines of the *Yellow Book*. If one is to examine the attitudes to the working classes, such profound variations may also be discerned. Volume II contains two works concerned with the “lower orders,” which also display this polarisation of New, Modern attitudes to society’s layers and

typically bourgeois Victorian tradition.<sup>415</sup> John Davidson's poem "Thirty Bob a Week" is a blistering attack on bourgeois attitudes to the poor, and most memorable for the note of utter defiance towards "social betters" that became the blazon of many social and artistic movements in the twentieth century. The poem begins with a truly revolutionary approach to the matter of social ordering, and spits forth its venom in a coarse vernacular with pride:

[...] I don't allow it's luck and all a toss;  
 There's no such thing as being starved or crossed;  
 It's just the power of some to be a boss,  
 And the bally power of others to be bossed:  
 I face the music, sir: you bet I ain't a cur!  
 Strike me for lucky if I don't believe I'm lost!" (*Yellow Book* II, 99.)

This anti-romantic portrayal of the working poor rails against the injustices of low wages, and as it does so, opposes most stridently the middle-class notion of social betterment, and those who might differentiate between the deserving and undeserving poor:

I awoke because I thought the time had come;  
 Beyond my will there was no other cause:  
 And everywhere I found myself at home  
 Because I chose to be the thing I was (*Yellow Book* II, 102).

The demand for financial betterment without social refinement becomes a dominant, anti-bourgeois theme in the poem, and as it progresses, the argument broadens from the social injustices and bourgeois attitudes themselves to encompass the belief systems that underpin those attitudes:

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<sup>415</sup> Sally Ledger also notes that "The clash of the "old" and the "new" that characterises *fin-de-siècle* cultural politics more generally is played out on microcosm in the pages of *The Yellow Book*," though her analysis of the periodical is restricted to a polarised view of sexual politics within the *Yellow Book* and its coterie. See Sally Ledger, "Wilde Women and *The Yellow Book*: The Sexual Politics of Aestheticism and Decadence," *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 50.1 (2007): 5-26.



*I was the love that chose my mother out;  
 I joined two lives and from the union burst;  
 My weakness and my strength without a doubt  
 Are mine alone for ever from the first. [sic]  
 It's just the very same with a difference in the name  
 As "Thy will be done." You say it if you durst!*

*They say it daily up and down the land  
 As easy as you take your drink, it's true  
 But the difficultest go to understand,  
 And the difficultest job a man can do,  
 Is to come it brave and meek with thirty bob a week,  
 And feel that it's the proper thing for you. (Yellow Book II, 102; Davidson's italics.)*

In doing so, Davidson's work appears as a poetic refutation of Cecil Frances Alexander's archetypical hymn to Victorian Empire, "All Things Bright and Beautiful" (1848). The original third verse states:

*The rich man in his castle,  
 The poor man at his gate,  
 God made them high or lowly,  
 And ordered their estate.<sup>416</sup>*

Davidson exposes the hypocrisy of bourgeois attitudes towards poverty and attacks such notions of a Divinely ordered society: "'Thy will be done.' You say it if you durst!" The poem represents a high point in the *Yellow Book* in terms of articulating the plight of the industrial poor. His place in society is most definitely not one "made" and "ordered" by the Almighty; he is proud and defensive of his culture and would sooner bite the proffered hand of evangelical philanthropists, for whom financial and material aid is concomitant with social and moral advancement, and only to be received upon bended knee.

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<sup>416</sup> Richard Watson, Kenneth Trickett, Norman Goldhawk, John White, Janet Wootton and David House, eds., *Companion to Hymns and Psalms* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing, 1988) 213. This source notes that verse three is one of two original verses presently omitted. The original sixth verse is currently not included on the grounds of it being 'too "countrified"' although no reason is given for the omission of the third.

By contrast, the same volume includes Charlotte M. Mew's melodrama, "Passed" (*Yellow Book* II, 121), which also has the plight of the poor as its theme, but the narrator is a respectable, young, middle-class wife, for whom visiting the urban poor appears to be something of a romantic pastime, as the tale begins,

Let those who have missed a romantic view of London in its poorest quarters – and there will romance be found – wait for a sunset in early winter [...] On such an evening in mid-December, I put down my sewing and left the tame glories of fire-light [...] to welcome, as youth may, the contrast of keen air outdoors to the glow within. (*Yellow Book* II, 121.)

In stark contrast to Davidson's defiant demand for justice and an utter refusal to be defined by the romantic or religious notions of the bourgeoisie, Mew's goodly traveller-in-poor-land proclaims "Here was human agony set forth in meagre lines, voiceless, but articulate to the soul." (*Yellow Book* II, 125.) To add insult to romanticised injury, it transpires that these waifs are not of the working caste, but fallen angels from the upper echelons: "The destitution of her surroundings accorded ill with the girl's spotless person and well-tended hands [...] Subsequently I realised that these deserted beings must have first fronted the world from a sumptuous stage." (*Yellow Book* II, 127.) From this basis of typically Victorian romantic tragedy, the heroine becomes drawn into their melodramatic tale of suffering, misery and death. The final passage sees the child die, marked by the sound of "a laugh mounting to a cry." The story closes with the questions, "Did it proceed from some defeated angel? or the woman's mouth? or mine? God knows!" (*Yellow Book* II, 141.) Clearly the sentiment implied by the open-ended finale is "there, but for the grace of God, go I" – the very foundations of Alexander's theocratic view of the British class system, and a theory to which Davidson's poem is utterly opposed.

This grouping together of disparate mind-sets is also clearly visible in the artistic contributions, where members of the Royal Academy were seen to be rubbing shoulders with the New English Art Club, notably Frederick Leighton and Aubrey Beardsley respectively in volume I.<sup>417</sup> Some critics, such as Katherine Mix, choose to see this extreme variety of content within the *Yellow Book* as a demonstration of Lane's open-mindedness, and as being emblematic of his "policy of fair play."<sup>418</sup> However, if one is to view the *Yellow Book* as being placed within the tradition of the aesthetic and decadent Little Magazines that preceded its inception, the choice of contributors is crucial to understanding the message that the publication is voicing, or being seen to voice.

*The Century Guild Hobby Horse* was presided over by architects whose *raison d'être* was the establishment of an art-centric society where the artist was to retake his rightful place from the tradesman, and the *Dial's* editorial board of artists sought to create a work of beauty whenever the "sun of inspiration" gave nourishment enough. However, the *Yellow Book* was presided over by a businessman,<sup>419</sup> whose intentions were to produce a monthly magazine of "at least 250 pages," in order to fill a gap in the literary periodical market. This central lack of any fundamental guiding artistic principle may be discerned in what, according to the previous periodicals here examined, is the second most important aspect: the issue of precisely who is to be selected to contribute.

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<sup>417</sup> Leighton dropped out of the *Yellow Book* in disgust on account of being forced to keep such company. See Harrison, ed., *The Yellow Book* 10.

<sup>418</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 86.

<sup>419</sup> Although Beardsley and Harland were the official editors, Lane worked as "editor in chief," and his word was always final. For details see Mix, *Study in Yellow* 61.

It is in the matter of the *Yellow Book* being “withal popular” that the magazine departs most radically from those earlier periodicals of the *fin de siècle* with which it is often compared. The *Hobby Horse* drew its contributions from a small pool of like-minded artists and critics devoted to the cause, and *The Dial* restricted itself to the musings of its central, founding four artistes. However, the *Yellow Book*, in its efforts to be popular, and its need to fill a minimum number of 250 pages per month, was open to the contributions of the entire reading public. From number II onwards, the title page is faced by a note from Harland detailing the conditions for the return of rejected, unsolicited manuscripts. Indeed, a great many contributions, and notable contributors, such as Ella D’Arcy, were introduced to the editors in this manner.<sup>420</sup> Although these unsolicited works were passed through an editorial selection process, it nevertheless marks a radical departure in terms of any “message” that the periodical might seek, or be seen to promote. If it stood for decadence, so too must it be seen to stand for bourgeois middle-class values, not to mention its place as a flagship publication in an aspirational middle-class businessman’s company.

Decadent or not, all were literally bound together in Lane’s yellow-backed book, and as illustrated by the responses to Lane’s marketing of the magazine pre-publication, Lane successfully manipulated the populace into tarring all those who contributed with the same yellow brush. Ian Fletcher has suggested that a contributory factor in this process was the “‘new’ journalism with its coarse deadlines,” which rendered it “unable and unwilling to distinguish delicately” in such matters as the stance of the

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<sup>420</sup> Ella D’Arcy became virtual co-editor with Harland, though she denies that this was in an official capacity. See Mix, *Study in Yellow* 190. Her prose contributions rank second to only Harland in terms of frequency, throughout the series.

*Yellow Book*, which he describes as being “like Wilde’s paradoxes, for real.”<sup>421</sup>

Lane’s success in forever joining the term “decadence” with “yellowness” in terms of public perception is a facet of Hubert Crackenthorpe’s masterful work “Reticence in Literature: Some Roundabout Remarks” included in the *Yellow Book* (II, 259). It had been a policy of Lane and Harland to include within the magazine works that acted essentially as self-criticism.<sup>422</sup> The Conservatives had been granted what in effect was a double-headed pre-emptive strike in any war of artistic styles, in the form of Arthur Waugh’s “Reticence in Literature” (*Yellow Book* I, 201) and Philip Gilbert Hamerton, LL. D.’s “The Yellow Book: A Criticism of Volume I” (*Yellow Book* II, 179). Quite predictably, James, Watson and Le Gallienne are praised, whilst Symons, Beardsley and Beerbohm are damned, either specifically or by inference. Crackenthorpe’s response is witty, yet measured, insightful and scholarly, exposing the bigotry and ignorance of his opponents. Rising above the issue of what “should” or what “should not” be considered artistic, both in the magazine itself and in terms of the popular perception of modern artists, Crackenthorpe identifies this coalescing of perception amongst the masses as media-manipulation helps group together disparate artists in public consciousness:

And a new word has been invented to explain the whole business: Decadence, decadence: you are all decadent nowadays. Ibsen, Degas, and the New English Art Club; Zola, Oscar Wilde, and the Second Mrs. Tanqueray. Mr. Richard Le Gallienne is hoist with his own petard; even the British playwright has not escaped the taint. Ah, what a hideous spectacle. All whirling along towards one common end. (*Yellow Book* II, 266.)

For the indiscriminate “new” journalists and the unenlightened masses who read their work, decadence may be defined as being merely that which is perceived as

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<sup>421</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 195.

<sup>422</sup> Harrison, ed., *The Yellow Book* 16.

being decadent. Le Gallienne may be avowedly anti-decadent, and may hate all things French in art, yet his work is displayed within the *Yellow Book*; and the mock-French, yellow-backed *Yellow Book*, and all that sailed within her, had been christened “decadent” from the start, and decadent they would remain.

Crackenthorpe’s essay, however, goes far beyond this one simple role of capturing the contemporary attitudes towards modern art and literature. The work is a well-structured piece of rhetoric, tackling bourgeois attitudes towards art in general, and literature in particular, which would sit perfectly alongside the writings of Selwyn Image, Herbert Horne or Arthur Galton in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*. He clearly identifies the enemies of Art as being “the *bourgeois*,” and recognises Arnold’s labelling of them as “Philistines” (*Yellow Book* II, 262-3). Arnold and Pater are brought to mind throughout the essay, as Crackenthorpe makes statements such as “The business of art is to create for us fine interests, to make of our human nature a more complete thing,” as he delineates between morality “in the wide and truer sense of the word,” and the “moral ogre’s” simplistic view of morality as concerning only “relations between the sexes and [...] between man and man” (*Yellow Book* II, 264-5). Pater’s central philosophy in the *Renaissance* is invoked specifically as we are told that literary works of art

are inevitably stamped with the hallmark of [the artist’s] personality [...] Every piece of imaginative work must be a kind of autobiography of its creator – significant, if not of the actual facts of his existence, at least of the inner working of his soul. (*Yellow Book* II, 261.)<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> This is the essential philosophy underpinning Pater’s evaluation of his Renaissance personalities and is especially evident in the chapters on Leonardo da Vinci and Winckelmann, *WPR*, 77-101, 141-185.

The personality is thus central to the true spirit of Art, in terms of both creation and appreciation, as Crackenthorpe espouses the Paterian, if not to say Oxonian, philosophy that “individual interpretation” is the key to all. Image himself is practically paraphrased as Crackenthorpe builds his case for interpretation over replication in matters of art, stating, “Art is not invested with the futile function of perpetually striving after imitation or reproduction of Nature.” (*Yellow Book* II, 260.) The fact that this essay is firmly rooted in the issues discussed in Image’s tripartite essay on Art in relation to the Nude, Nature and the Surrounding Life in 1886, is made plain by an oblique reference to Horsley’s British Matron campaign:

If imitation be the sincerest form of flattery, then our moral ogre must indeed have experienced a proud moment, when a follower came to him from the camp of the lovers of Art, and the artistic objector to realistic fiction started on its timid career. (*Yellow Book* II, 265.)

The statement has particular value in the fact that Crackenthorpe clearly identifies modern arguments in the field of literature in the mid 1890s with the Horsley-initiated battle over the role of the Nude in fine art in 1885. As Crackenthorpe expands his argument, differentiating between “the literary artist” and “the man who merely caters for the public taste,” his allegiance with the central philosophies of both the Century Guild and the Vale is made manifest:

The essential conditions of the two cases are entirely distinct. The one man is free to give untrammelled expression to his own soul, free to fan the flame that burns in his heart: the other is a seller of wares, a unit in national commerce. (*Yellow Book* II, 267-8.)

Akin to the *Dial*’s “sun of inspiration,” the true Artist creates solely from the “flame that burns in his heart.” His opponent is merely a tradesman, and worse than that, a

tradesman who has usurped the role of the true Artist – the avowed enemy of the Century Guild and the very beast that its circle of knights was created to defeat.

Concentrating on the attributes of the “moral ogre,” Crackenthorpe begins to develop some of the theories manifest in much of the literary work represented in *The Dial*.

Drawing his caricature, Crackenthorpe writes

Let us remember that he has never professed to understand Art, and the deep debt of gratitude that every artist in the land should consequently owe to him; let us remember that he is above us, for he belongs to the great middle classes; let us remember that he commands votes, that he is candidate for the County Council; let us remember that he is delightful because he is *intelligible*. (*Yellow Book* II, 264; my italics.)

Crackenthorpe is here moving the argument into the realms of early Modernist theory, sharing much in common with the *Dial*'s policy of deliberately creating works that would be unintelligible to almost all but the artists themselves, in order to distance themselves from the tasteless masses. He continues,

Yes, he is intelligible; and of how many of us can that be said? His is no complex programme, no subtly exacting demand. A plain moral lesson is all that he asks, and his voice is as of one crying in the ever fertile wilderness of Smith and Mudie. (*Ibid.*)

From this theory of the relative intelligibility of art, Crackenthorpe attacks traditional Victorian literature, and in doing so, takes up a stance in direct opposition to bourgeois Victorian, Protestant absolutes, in favour of a distinctly Modern view of life as unfinished, fragmented and uncertain:

Sometimes, to listen to him you would imagine that pessimism and regular meals were incompatible; that the world is only ameliorated by those it completely satisfies, that good predominates over evil, that the problem of our destiny had been solved long ago. (*Yellow Book* II, 266.)



With the proto-Modernist agenda set, and England's continuing necessity to explore its own soul through the medium of Art espoused, Crackenthorpe moves the argument on from these "little bouts with the *bourgeois*" which have provided so much sport in the past, and now warns of a new enemy to Literature:

True is it that the society lady, dazzled by the brilliancy of her own conversation, and the serious-minded spinster, bitten by some sociological theory, still decide in the old jaunty spirit, that fiction is the obvious medium through which to astonish or improve the world. Let us beware of the despotism of the intelligent amateur, and cease our toying with that quaint and winsome bogey of ours, the British Philistine, whilst the intelligent amateur, the deadliest of Art's enemies, is creeping up in our midst.

For the familiarity of the man in the street with the material employed by the artist in fiction, will ever militate against the acquisition of a sound, fine, and genuine standard of workmanship. Unlike the musician, the painter, the sculptor, the architect, the artist in fiction enjoys no monopoly in his medium. (*Yellow Book* II, 268-9.)

Written at a time when the first fruits of the 1870 Education Act were coming into season, resulting in a newly literate and wider-reading public, Crackenthorpe's argument raises important questions for the implication of literary art.<sup>424</sup> Moving away from literary and artistic battles regarding morality, Crackenthorpe identifies a profound shift in matters of art and society with reference to literature. As the *Dial* had begun to raise the issue of precisely who should have the right to determine what is, and what is not art, Crackenthorpe identifies the significance of such matters for the art of literature, as radical changes in society result in an increasingly literate population. Indeed, the central aspect of the above statement is rooted in notions of the class monopoly of art, and the right to interpret art, which become defining aspects of twentieth-century Modernism and Post Modernism.

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<sup>424</sup> It is also significant that Crackenthorpe is writing in the very year that the Oxford English School was founded (1894), establishing English Literature as an academic discipline in its own right. See D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies: An Account of the Study of English Language and Literature from Its Origins to the Making of the Oxford School of English* (London: OUP, 1965) vii.

Although this essay would easily sit alongside much of the work in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* and *The Dial*, it is important to make a distinction between its place within the *Yellow Book*, and any similar works found in the earlier periodicals. This is no manifesto piece endorsed by the editors and contributors of the magazine as a whole, but a response, refutation or counter-argument to bourgeois criticism in the first two volumes of the periodical itself. In effect, the battle is within the *Yellow Book*, and not between the *Yellow Book* and the world at large, as was the case with the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* and the *Dial*. Crackenthorpe may indeed have viewed the work of some of his colleagues as amounting to the untutored ramblings of the man, or woman, in the street. As has already been demonstrated, bourgeois sentiments and simplistic notions of morality abound within the *Yellow Book*. Moreover, Crackenthorpe's work is unique in its intensity and directness of attack upon bourgeois values and opinions in matters of art; and amid the cacophonous roar of the myriad voices, values and messages contained within the *Yellow Book*, Crackenthorpe's voice is that of one alone, crying in the yellow wilderness.

Had they taken his message to heart, Lane and certain of the more conservative writers would no doubt have found "Reticence in Literature: Some Roundabout Remarks" quite troublesome. Lane's policy on unsolicited manuscripts undermines any political unity of purpose. Also the unashamed commercialism of the Bodley Head, and indeed some of its writers, may have placed them all a little too close to representing the mere "seller of wares, a unit in national commerce," whom Crackenthorpe so bitterly despises. Henry James, for example, openly spoke of his "hatred" for the "horrid aspect and company of the whole publication," but, as he

wrote to his brother William, continued to contribute the type of stories Harland required “for gold.”<sup>425</sup>

Finally, it was indeed the conservative elements within the *Yellow Book* that were to have a defining influence upon the contents, message and fate of the publication. Frederick Leighton and Henry James had been notable early opponents to the new breed artists and writers,<sup>426</sup> but it was William Watson’s sustained campaign of hatred towards the *avant garde* that culminated in his organising a virtual *coup d’état* within the Bodley Head at the time of the Wilde scandal, forcing Lane to accept their demand for Beardsley’s expulsion.<sup>427</sup> Faced with the loss of some of his most profitable writers, Lane acquiesced to the long-simmering demands for Beardsley’s sacrifice, and in doing so displayed in the clearest possible terms the *Yellow Book*’s precise and total opposition to the most fundamental philosophy on Art and the Artist within the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*. By any measure, if there was one person who was to lay claim to the crown of “The Artist” within the *Yellow Book* it was Aubrey Beardsley, and Lane sacrificed The Artist for matters of base commercial interest.

Beardsley’s dismissal has yet more symbolic significance, as it marks the point at which Art and bourgeois notions of deviant sexual morality become one. As Fraser Harrison notes, “in the mind of Mrs Humphry Ward and the like, Wilde and

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<sup>425</sup> Leon Edel, ed., *Henry James: Letters Volume 3, 1883-1895*, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980) 482.

<sup>426</sup> See Harrison, ed., *The Yellow Book* 10.

<sup>427</sup> Technically, it was Frederic Chapman who made the decision to fire Beardsley, after Watson presented an ultimatum signed by several lucrative Bodley Head authors threatening resignation if he did not agree. Lane, being in America at the time, left the decision to his subordinate, and so one may be tempted to view his sin in the affair as being one of omission, rather than of action. Nevertheless Lane’s subsequent lies over the matter, suggesting Beardsley left of his own accord, place the publisher in a less than flattering light. For details see Mix, *Study in Yellow* chapter 15, 140-147.

Beardsley were indistinguishable,” though, within the confines of the debate, one was a convicted sex offender (by the law of the day), and the other simply a creative artist. The movement which started in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, aligning the artist with notions of sexual licence, as a reaction to bourgeois, Protestant demands to rid the art world of the Nude, reached its conclusion with the dismissal of the greatest name in 1890s British Art Nouveau from the *Yellow Book*, as his art and Wilde’s sins became one entity. And although the stone-throwing masses played their part, it was essentially an act perpetrated by the bourgeois commercial majority within the Bodley Head and the *Yellow Book* itself.

One final piece of irony-laden symbolism remains in the tale of the Bodley Head’s in-house periodical. After having made so sure that Wilde had no connections with his precious *Yellow Book*, Lane often recounted how, upon reading of the press’s mistake in stating “Arrest of Oscar Wilde, *Yellow Book* under his arm” the incident came as a “rude shock. ‘It killed the *Yellow Book*, and it nearly killed me.’”<sup>428</sup>

Although the terrible coincidence of Wilde’s carrying a yellow-backed copy of Pierre Louÿs’ *Aphrodite* is the root of the problem, the press and public’s mistaking it for the *Yellow Book* should not have come as a surprise at all. This was the precise premise that Lane had been trading on for the previous year. Thanks to Lane’s marketing, the *Yellow Book* was perceived as being French, decadent, sexually deviant and risqué, all the things that Louÿs’ work was, but the *Yellow Book*, as a whole, was not. It is only right, then, that a genuine “yellow-back” was eventually mistaken for the *Yellow Book*. The press’ blunder must be viewed as the culminating success of Lane’s commercial machinations in the realm of decadent periodical

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<sup>428</sup> May, *John Lane* 80.

publications; Lane's fake was mistaken for the real thing. Thereby, as Hubert Crackenthorpe might have put it, was Lane hoist with *his* own petard.

### 3.5 *The Savoy* – A Homecoming.

*The Savoy* was established as a rival to the *Yellow Book*, as is asserted in virtually all critical works on the publication.<sup>429</sup> The timing of its formation, and the central coupling of the ousted Beardsley and the troublesome Symons – the two decadent firebrands now deemed too dangerous for Lane's publication – ably demonstrate the magazine's relationship with that most popular of 'nineties periodicals. However, to see the *Savoy* as being a rival of the *Yellow Book* alone is to miss the greater part of the periodical's significance; a more accurate appraisal of the magazine will view it as a *reaction to the Yellow Book*, rather than offspring or imitator.

Its personnel betrays the yellow connection, in as much as all those whom Lane exiled, permanently or temporarily, from the *Yellow Book*, alongside those who sided with Beardsley in the feud, found themselves a new home in the *Savoy*. Beardsley himself was welcomed as a contributor of both art and literature, alongside Symons, Max Beerbohm, Hubert Crackenthorpe, Will Rothenstein, Walter Sickert, and Joseph Pennell.<sup>430</sup> Though by no means representing all of those *Yellow Book* contributors who defected to the *Savoy*,<sup>431</sup> this short list represents the central figures of Lane's former *avant garde*, all now adding to the significant plumage in Leonard Smithers' new cap.

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<sup>429</sup> For example, see Weintraub's introduction, Stanley Weintraub, ed., *The Savoy: Nineties Experiment* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1966), Mix, *Study in Yellow* 198.

<sup>430</sup> Beerbohm returned to the *Yellow Book* after a four-volume "cooling off" period, but contributed only to volumes IX and XI. Crackenthorpe contributed one final article to Lane's periodical in October 1895, volume VII, but Rothenstein and Pennell left the *Yellow Book* in support of Beardsley, and Sickert also ceased to contribute after volume V.

<sup>431</sup> Fourteen literary contributors for *The Savoy* had previously contributed to the *Yellow Book*. See Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994) 148.

However, the make-up of the *Savoy* is far more revealing than being simply *Yellow Book* contributors “and others.” After the split between Lane and Mathews, the Rhymers’ circle and allied remnants of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* had remained largely loyal to Mathews, shunning Lane’s *Yellow Book*, and, with the demise of the new *Hobby Horse*, had been left without a voice in the arts-periodical world of 1894-5.<sup>432</sup> Katherine Mix, writing on the Lane-Mathews split, notes that Mathews “took a number of Lane’s most cherished writers with him, including Dowson, Johnson, Selwyn Image, Herbert Horne, ‘Michael Field,’ and Yeats.”<sup>433</sup> By 1896, Herbert Horne had removed himself from the fray, cloistering himself in the world of art history and planning towards his eventual emigration to Italy. Likewise, Arthur Galton had taken up his secretarial role in Australia; but Selwyn Image, Ernest Dowson, and Lionel Johnson, along with fellow Rhymers W. B. Yeats and Ernest Rhys all found a new home in *The Savoy*.<sup>434</sup> Joined with the *Yellow Book* defectors, this motley band represented a body of writers and artists opposed to Lane’s style of business, and now given voice in a new periodical. More than this, over the eight issues of *The Savoy* they were joined by George Bernard Shaw, Frederick Wedmore, Rudolf Dircks, Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, Joseph Conrad, George Moore, Ford Maddox Heuffer, John Gray, Vincent O’ Sullivan, James McNeill Whistler, Charles Conder and Charles Haslewood Shannon. The

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<sup>432</sup> The oppositional nature of the Lane–Mathews divide may also be seen in the fact that, upon learning of Beardsley’s dismissal, Mathews came “to his aid almost at once with a commission to draw a frontispiece for Walt Ruding’s *An Evil Motherhood* [1896]” See Mix, *Study in Yellow* 163. (Mix states that Beardsley did not take up the offer of work, though this would appear to be inaccurate. Mathews published two editions of the book in 1896, and at least one was published by George H. Richmond in New York the same year, all of which are illustrated by Beardsley.)

<sup>433</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 39.

<sup>434</sup> The prospectus for the *Yellow Book* cites Image and Rhys as contributors, though neither actually submitted work for the magazine. Dowson and Johnson only contributed one article each to the *Yellow Book*, and although Johnson’s involvement with the *Savoy* was equally fleeting, Dowson became a mainstay of Smithers’ magazine throughout, as did Yeats.

names alone display the fact that, unlike the all-inclusive *Yellow Book*, the *Savoy* represents a distillation of *avant garde*, decadent and Modernist art, literature and thought, and in this respect far out-strips its direct predecessor.<sup>435</sup>

Harland had been determined to make volume VIII of the *Yellow Book* a special affair, ensuring that “the buyer should get his money’s worth from this volume” on account of January 1896 marking the first appearance of *The Savoy*, its only direct rival.<sup>436</sup> Indeed, volume VIII is one of the largest at 406 pages; however, January 1896 also marks a profound change in the physical quality of the *Yellow Book*, as it is at this point that Lane switched paper sources. Illustration pages become much thinner, and the letterpress is printed on rougher, thinner and obviously cheaper, machine-made paper. In addition to this, the cover itself is far poorer than all that preceded it, in terms of both design and execution. The almost child-like, poorly-defined quality of the covers to *Yellow Books* VIII and IX stand in stark contrast to the finely-wrought, intricate cover designs by Beardsley that graced the first issues of *The Savoy*.

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<sup>435</sup> Typically *Yellow Book*-esque melodrama is also represented in the *Savoy*, such as the short story “Beauty’s Hour” by Olivia Shakespear (*Savoy* III, 11 & IV, 11) but, unlike the *Yellow Book*, such matter is most definitely in the minority.

<sup>436</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 198.



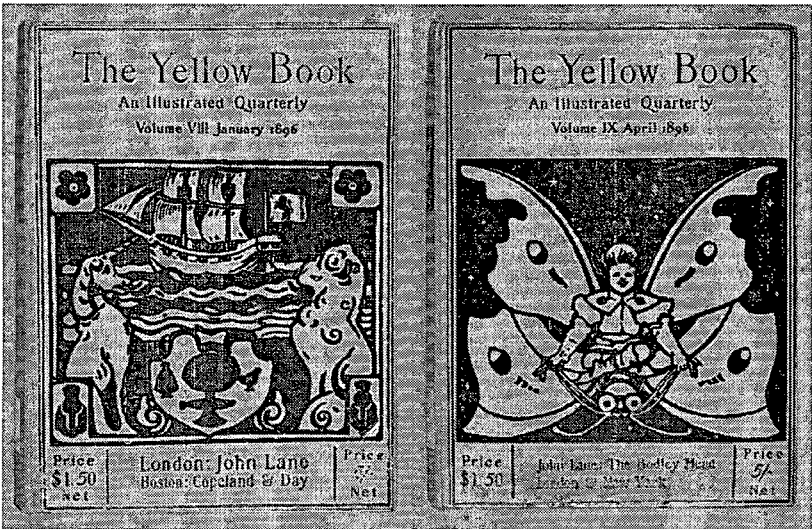


Figure 10 - Front covers to volumes VIII and IX of the *Yellow Book* (1896; courtesy of Durham University Library.)

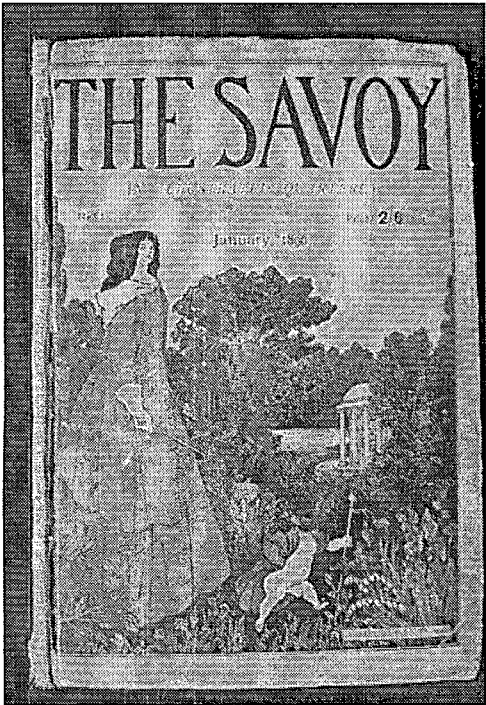


Figure 11 - *The Savoy* issue 1, 1896, front cover (author’s private collection).

This disparity of quality between the two magazines is confirmed by Ernest Dowson; comparing the two magazines after his defection to the *Savoy* he writes, “For type & excellence of reproduction it licks the ‘Yellow Book’ hollow & no expense has been

spared in reproducing the illustrations. Also Beardsley is at his best.”<sup>437</sup> Though slightly less than half the thickness of its jaundiced progenitor, the first volume of the *Savoy* clearly aspired to quality over quantity, as Symons makes plain in his “Editorial Note,” itself something of a parody of Harland’s Prospectus of 1894:

It is hoped that “THE SAVOY” will be a periodical of an exclusively literary and artistic kind. To present Literature in the shape of its letterpress, Art in the form of its illustrations, will be its aim. For the attainment of that aim we can but rely on our best endeavours and on the logic of our belief that good writers and artists will care to see their work in company with the work of good writers and artists. (*Savoy* I, “Editorial Note.”)

The importance of artists agreeing to the company they are forced to keep, within the covers of a periodical, would not have been lost upon those who had formerly worked for the *Yellow Book*. Furthermore, Harland’s long lists of would-be contributors in his prospectus is avoided quite pointedly, with the statement that

Readers who look to a new periodical for only very well-known or only very obscure names must permit themselves to be disappointed. We have no objection to a celebrity who deserves to be celebrated, or to an unknown person who has not been seen often enough to be recognised in passing. All we ask from our contributors is good work, and good work is all we offer our readers. (*Ibid.*)

Symons refutes any “formulas” or labels such as “Realists, or Romanticists, or Decadents,” but his statement that “For us, all art is good which is good art” clearly aims to set the periodical above issues concerning art and morality, placing it well within the tradition of Paterian, and indeed Wildean attitudes towards the arts. Though this prefatory declaration does not appear to fit Gautier’s “*l’art pour l’art*” exactly, Charles Ricketts’ theorising that art may be declared “good” so long as it is created for its own sake, would easily unite Gautier and Symons in this matter.

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<sup>437</sup> Letter to Arthur Moore, 22 and 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1895. Flower and Maas, eds., *The Letters of Ernest Dowson* 336.

Hence, though ostensibly denying any tags, Symons' introduction to *The Savoy* makes plain the magazine's guiding principle – a devotion to true Art. This is confirmed in his valedictory Epilogue in volume VIII, which paraphrases Gautier more directly. Cataloguing the events which led to the commercial failure of the *Savoy*, Symons remarks,

worst of all, we assumed that there were very many people in the world who really cared for art, and really for art's sake.

The more I consider it, the more I realize that this is not the case. Comparatively very few people care for art at all, and most of these care for it because they mistake it for something else. (*Savoy* VIII, 92.)

Thus, as opposed to the *Yellow Book*'s commercial *raison d'être*, the *Savoy* aimed to put notions of Art above commercial concerns – a fact born out by Symons' admission of failure in the market place. This manifesto of Art above commerce clearly links the intent of the *Savoy* with the traditions of both the Century Guild and Ricketts' and Shannon's Vale. Therefore, along with many of the personnel in the *Savoy*, its art-centric agenda marks the magazine out as being more a descendent of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* than the *Yellow Book*.

A significant part of the *Savoy*'s idea of what is "good art" is indeed the decadence which Lane used to spice the *Yellow Book* before the conservative elements in both his own tastes, and that amongst his in-house writers, finally ousted the *avant garde*. Symons, as editor, contributes poetry and prose to every volume. His poetry is quintessentially decadent, such as in the "agonizing ecstasy of desire" which permeates "New Year's Eve" (*Savoy* II, 25), and the faded flowers of "In Carnival":

Life, in her motley, sheds in showers  
 The rose of hours still delicate,  
 But you and I have come too late  
 Into the Carnival of flowers. (*Savoy* III, 58.)

His criticism defends Zola and Huysmans (*Savoy* III, 100), and idolises Verlaine and Pater (*Savoy* VII, 88 and VIII, 33 respectively). Typically decadent themes pervade his creative prose, in the languid and sensuous memoir, “Dieppe: 1895” (*Savoy* I, 84) illustrated by Beardsley, and decadent content is matched in form with “At the Alhambra: Impressions and Sensations” (*Savoy* V, 75). Similarly, Dowson contributes to seven of the eight numbers (Symons and Beardsley composed volume VIII in its entirety). His personal traumas and delights have by now become decadent tropes in themselves, as he retells tales of tragic love between Englishmen and young, simple continental girls, such as in “The Eyes of Pride” (*Savoy* I, 51) and “Countess Marie of the Angels” (*Savoy* II, 173). The themes of unrequited love and morbid reflections on the transience of life, often with a French setting, are to be found throughout his poetry, noticeably “Saint-Germain-en-Laye” (*Savoy* II, 55) and “Breton Afternoon” (*Savoy* III, 40). Beardsley positively skips about the *Savoy* with delight, moving from his copious illustrations to poetry (two original compositions “Three Musicians,” I, 65 and “The Ballad of a Barber,” III, 91 and a translation of Catullus, VII, 52) and even the serialised novel, *Under the Hill*.<sup>438</sup> Hence the few decadent petals that perfumed the *Yellow Book* become the bold full bloom of the *Savoy*, making it much more deserving of the mantle “quintessence of decadence” in the field of *fin-de-siècle* British periodicals.

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<sup>438</sup> The novel was originally to have been published by Lane, as may be seen in the advertisements in the *Yellow Book* volume V (“Publications of John Lane,” page 4, bound in the rear). The book was to be entitled “The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser,” but was changed to *Under the Hill* when published by Smithers in the *Savoy*. It was later published independently by both Lane and Smithers. Its inclusion in the *Savoy* is also notable as, along with several other stories in the magazine, it is serialised from volume to volume, thereby displaying another area of difference in priorities between the *Savoy* and *Yellow Book*, in terms of the latter’s concept of “filling a gap” in the periodical market.

Therefore, in not only taking up all those whom Lane found too risqué, but setting them centre stage in his new periodical, Leonard Smithers shows himself as being much more daring than Lane. Indeed Beardsley saw Smithers, a celebrated publisher and trader of the erotic and exotic, as being “a man prepared to publish anything that the ‘others’ – that is, every publisher in London – were afraid of.”<sup>439</sup> As my work “The Shadow of Oscar Wilde” reveals, a great many of the works in the *Savoy* go far beyond that which has been seen in the *Yellow Book* in terms of challenging or subverting the sexual norm. The stories of Beardsley, Rudolf Dircks, Frederick Wedmore and Symons may be read as coded erotica, sharing many characteristics with the clandestine publishings of the likes of Smithers or his Paris-based counterpart, Charles Carrington. Several of the tales published in the *Savoy* are sexually subversive, such as Dircks’ “Ellen” (*Savoy* I, 103) and of course Beardsley’s *Under the Hill*, where traditional sexual and gender stereotypes are challenged, distorted or even turned on their head, along with Wedmore’s “Nancy Nanson” (*Savoy* I, 31 and II, 99) or Symons’ “Lucy Newcombe” (*Savoy* II, 147 and VIII, 51) where tales of sexual scandal are used to expose the hypocrisy and perversions within middle-class attitudes towards sexuality.<sup>440</sup> Although a few such works were included in the *Yellow Book*, such as Harland’s “Bohemian Girl,” Smithers’ writers shun the continental setting and easy-going, humorous, line that Harland took, setting the tales in England and telling them with a darker, often quite troubling, realism. Moreover, the self-congratulatory feel that permeates the work of the *Yellow Book*’s New Writers, as they compose their idealised tales of selfhood,

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<sup>439</sup> Peter Raby, *Aubrey Beardsley and the Nineties* (London: Collins and Brown, 1998) 70.

<sup>440</sup> See Tildesley, “Shadow of Oscar Wilde.”

writing of writers, is noticeably absent in *The Savoy*. The tales in Smithers' periodical look outward, rather than inward.

In this respect, the *Savoy* can be seen to be much more socially engaged than the somewhat narcissistic *Yellow Book*, as a significant number of its short stories are powerful critiques of middle-class standards. In terms of social engagement, "Sex, Science and the Church: Max Nordau and the *Savoy* (1896)" demonstrates how the backbone of the critical works contained in the periodical are actively engaged in a detailed refutation of Nordau's monument to bourgeois bigotry, *Degeneration*, the English translation of which had become available in 1895 and had fuelled the anti-decadent movement by giving it pseudo-scientific justification.<sup>441</sup> George Bernard Shaw's "On Going to Church" (*Savoy* I, 13), and many of the works of literary, philosophic and artistic criticism by Havelock Ellis that grace no less than six of the eight volumes, may be read as weighty arguments against Nordau's method and conclusions, and range from the detailed and scholastic to the outright parodic. Writers such as Ellis and Shaw are typical of the *Savoy*'s militant stance against bourgeois notions of art and morality, transfigured by Nordau into a justification for social genocide.<sup>442</sup> Taking Nordau as scientific fact, not to mention the "prophetic" qualities in his identification of the "pathological aberrations in Oscar Wilde's character" a full two years before his trials,<sup>443</sup> many perceived a dire need to rid Imperial Britain of this most pernicious social threat:

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<sup>441</sup> Matthew Brinton Tildesley, "Sex, Science and the Church: Max Nordau and *The Savoy* (1896)" M.A., University of Durham, 2004.

<sup>442</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the social impact of *Degeneration*, see Tildesley, "Sex, Science and the Church," chapter 1, 4-10.

<sup>443</sup> William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) 123.

There is not a man or woman in the English-speaking world possessed of the treasure of a wholesome mind who is not under a deep debt of gratitude to the Marquess of Queensbury for destroying the High Priest of the Decadents [...] But to the exposure there must be legal and social sequels [...] and the Decadents, of their hideous conceptions of the meanings of Art, of their worse than Eleusinian mysteries, there must be an absolute end.<sup>444</sup>

The *Observer*'s jingoism matches that of Horsley and his British Matrons in *The Times*, 1885, precisely. Hence the *Savoy*'s attack upon Nordau and the bourgeois, Protestant values that both underpinned his work, and were exacerbated by it, places Smithers magazine alongside the central core of writing within the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* that sought to wrench Art from the hands of the Great British Philistine.

The *Yellow Book* is not devoid of work engaged with such issues, though Crackenthorpe's work can in no way be taken as a "manifesto" piece and is certainly not representative of the magazine as a whole. *The Savoy*, on the other hand, with its agenda of putting Art first, is engaged in all of the same social battles as the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, arguing against puritanism in art and society at large, and revelling in the illicit and the suggestive in both its art and letterpress. Hence Smithers' "daring" may be seen in its true colours, as his periodical is far more risqué *after* Wilde's trials than the *Yellow Book* ever was *before* them.

Much of the previous criticism regarding the *Savoy* has failed to grasp the importance of the magazine's defence of Art and the Artist. Katherine Mix saw nothing but "a desire to pander to [the public's] liking for the doubtful and forbidden" in the *Savoy* which was, for her, emblematic of the fact that "unlike Lane,

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<sup>444</sup> National Observer, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1895, cited Hyde, *Famous Trials: Seventh Series: Oscar Wilde* 156.

[Smithers] had no interest in uplifting the public's taste."<sup>445</sup> Stanley Weintraub's erroneous view that the magazine "espoused no religion or party, took no stand on [...] imperialism, suffrage, or other problems directly meaningful to a public,"<sup>446</sup> was challenged by Laurel Brake, who sought to refute the "twentieth-century scholarship" aiming to "detoxify *The Savoy*'s defiant provocations and eroticism."<sup>447</sup> However, her view of it being "aggressively male" in its stance does tend to simplify the impact of the *Savoy* as a whole. *Subjugated Knowledges* depicts the magazine in terms of a polarised gender debate, when compared to the *Yellow Book*, and thereby misses the greater importance of the magazine when viewed as being in the tradition of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* and its concomitant discourse on Art and Society.<sup>448</sup>

Although *The Savoy* only ran to only eight issues compared to the *Hobby Horse*'s thirty two, it does contain many ideas and concerns central to that founding father of the Little Magazines. Alongside the art-centric manifesto and the battle against the puritans, Selwyn Image's writing "Of Criticism and the Critic," itself an expansion of his brief attack upon the New Journalism in the new *Hobby Horse*, rings out with Arnoldian and Paterian rhetoric:

The ideal function of criticism is indeed to discern the true character of the thing criticised; but when we get off mere facts, as in the arts, such criticism is to mortals for the most part impossible; when we assume to deliver it we are ludicrously, irritatingly impertinent. To learn, however, how a man is affected by this or that specimen of the arts at the moment before him, entertains and stimulates me. (*Savoy* I, 144.)

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<sup>445</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 202.

<sup>446</sup> Weintraub, ed., *The Savoy: Nineties Experiment* xli.

<sup>447</sup> Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges* 148.

<sup>448</sup> It could of course be argued that this Oxonian, art-centric discourse is indeed an inherently masculine doctrine; however, such a line of debate would be out of place in the current study.



The idea of the effect that art has on the observer as a means of judging its worth recalls Pater's technique in much of the *Renaissance*, as Mrs Oliphant's criticism of Pater demonstrates his "Sheer determination to confer upon this primitive teacher [Botticelli] some 'unique faculty,' which no one else has divined, and to find out for him a special virtue which shall act upon Mr. Pater's Me in a distinct and recognizable way."<sup>449</sup> Similarly, the importance of "the moment before him" is distinctly Paterian, not to mention being the essential philosophy of the "Art of Life" as outlined by Image in his "Bundle Of Letters" in the *Hobby Horse*.

The notion of Catholicism as an aesthetic, rather than religious creed, as professed by Image, Galton and Horne within the *Hobby Horse*, is reiterated by Bernard Shaw in the *Savoy*. "On Going to Church," openly attacks Protestantism, "that house of Satan," (*Savoy* I, 24) but praises the architecture of Catholic churches and cathedrals as offering succour to the human spirit. Though Shaw has the highest praise for "the holy air of the true Catholic Church," (*Savoy* I, 28) any supposition that his is in any way a religious belief is quashed by the statement that "There is still one serious obstacle to the churches on the very day when most people are best able and most disposed to visit them. I mean, of course, the services." (*Savoy* I, 23.) To further align his writing with that of the Century Guild, Shaw attacks the commercialism of modern architecture. Whilst praising the work of one Mr. Spence of Newcastle, architect and craftsman extraordinaire, Shaw berates the fact that "Under modern commercial conditions, it is impossible to get from the labour in the building-trade that artistic quality in the actual masonry which makes a good mediæval building independent of applied ornament." (*Savoy* I, 22-3.) Allied to the fact that "On Going

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<sup>449</sup> Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 88.

to Church,” the flagship article for the *Savoy* as a whole, is part of the Artist’s response to the attacks of the nouveau-Philistine, Nordau, these details and opinions demonstrate how Shaw’s article would sit perfectly alongside a great many of those found within the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*.

The Century Guild’s pioneering work in the publication of Blake and its constant preoccupation with criticism of and praise for Blake’s art, literature and philosophy within the *Hobby Horse*, is also mirrored in the *Savoy*. Issues III, IV and V all contain substantial articles on Blake by Yeats, coupled with a total of ten Blake illustrations, including “a hitherto unpublished illustration of a full frontal male nude,”<sup>450</sup> being *Dante Upon the Verge of Cocytus* (*Savoy* III, 55).

It was, however, this specific picture of Blake’s that played an all-important role in the *Savoy*’s downfall. In his final “Literary Causerie,” Symons recounts how it was the inclusion of this illustration that resulted in “The action of Messrs. Smith and Son in refusing to place “The Savoy” on their bookstalls” (*Savoy* VIII, 92). But in the spirit of upholding Art against the onslaughts of the philistine tradesman, they continued publishing Blake for another two issues. Furthermore, Symons states that in the *Savoy*, they were “giving so much for so little money.”<sup>451</sup> Indeed, by undercutting Lane by fifty percent per volume, (2 ½ shillings to the *Yellow Book*’s 5 for the initial quarterlies, and then only 2 shillings for the monthly) Smithers was taking a considerable commercial risk. However, the commercial failure of the *Savoy* confirms its status as being within the traditions of the Century Guild and the

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<sup>450</sup> Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges* 159.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

Vale. In its placing of Art over commercialism it was not as popular as Lane's commercially-sensitive *Yellow Book*; as Symons laments, the numbers of those "who really cared for art, and really for art's sake" were too few to sustain such an art-centric periodical in the market place. But, as Ricketts had theorised in *The Dial*, this quality of being elitist, in as much as being un-popular amongst, and inaccessible to, the masses, is itself a hallmark of true Art.

This view of the *Savoy* as honourable defender of Art stands in stark contrast to Herbert Horne's sarcastic appraisal of "the higher magazines, such as the *Yellow Book*, or – the *Savoy*," and his damning of Symons' work in particular as being "middle-class."<sup>452</sup> A large proportion of the venom within Horne's statements must be discounted as being merely a result of the considerable personal hatred between the two former friends. Horne's refusal to see a difference between the two "middle-class" magazines is as a result of his departure from the transition into decadence during the early 'nineties, owing to his complete immersion in the rarefied atmosphere of the very heights of fine art aestheticism.

This profound difference between Horne and Symons in 1896 is extremely valuable in illustrating the continuum from the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* in 1884 to *The Savoy* in 1896. The movement from aestheticism to a more socially-engaged decadence may be discerned within the *Century Guild* as a reaction to puritanical and bourgeois sentiments seeking to restrict the artist's work and sphere of influence. As Horsley's army of Matrons sought to rid the aesthetes of the right to portray nudity and explore matters of sexuality, the socially detached aesthetes, in taking up nudity

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<sup>452</sup> Fletcher, *Herbert Horne* 16.

in art and sexual deviation as defiant blazons, become socially engaged and their reactive attitudes to puritanical notions of morality result in them being labelled morally and artistically decadent. Manifestly, the *Savoy*, and not the *Yellow Book*, is the true claimant to any decadent crown, in its flagrant display of sexual subversion and disregard for, and opposition to, bourgeois notions of morality.

Moreover, it is the most potent symbol of this transition of the Century Guild's message from the purely aesthetic to the decadent, with all its allied notions of immorality and deviant sexuality. The agenda, issues and to a considerable extent the personnel of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, in continuing their fight against Puritanism, move from a periodical presided over by the architects, Horne and Mackmurdo, to one presided over by the pornographer, Leonard Smithers. In a sense, Horne has returned to the very start of the line from aestheticism to decadence, whereas Symons' *Savoy*, along with those *Hobby Horsers* and allies still left in the fight, mark the end.

The present study began by analysing the frozen moment in time, as Wilde's Dorian Gray shifts from his aesthetic life to a decadent life, the "new hedonism that was to re-create life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely puritanism."<sup>453</sup> This transition can be seen to be played out, issue by issue throughout the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* and *The Dial*, as the artist takes up an ever more defiant stance against bourgeois society; and within the pages of *The Savoy*, this artistic and philosophic transition from aestheticism to decadence is finally complete.

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<sup>453</sup> Wilde, *Dorian Gray and Mr W. H.*, bound White 66.

### 3.6 The Century Guild, Oscar Wilde and the Yellow Problem.

The present study has demonstrated the fact that, far from being the archetype, the *Yellow Book* is something of an anomaly amongst the tradition of the aesthetic *fin-de-siècle* magazines, which began with the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, and was followed by *The Dial* and *The Savoy*, and (although not examined in detail here) *The Pageant* (1896-7) and *The Dome* (1897-1900). As the *Yellow Book* is popularly linked with Wilde's tragic fall, it is necessary to re-examine the relationship between Oscar Wilde and the *Yellow Book*, and to re-evaluate his position within the field of *fin-de-siècle* British Little Magazines.

The unprecedented commercial success of the *Yellow Book*, along with Lane's unrivalled powers of moulding public perception, have resulted in the Bodley Head's in-house periodical being regarded as representing the very height of 1890s decadence, throughout much of the last century.<sup>454</sup> Likewise, Oscar Wilde has been known as the "High Priest of the Decadents" since his scandal first broke in 1895. This shared quality of decadent infamy has led to a great many misconceptions when considering the connections between the man and the magazine. Indeed, many antiquarian booksellers still advertise Wilde as being a contributor to the *Yellow Book*.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Joseph Bristow states that the *Yellow Book* "became synonymous with literary Decadence in Britain." *CWOW*, III, xx. G.A. Cevasco confirms, "in the public mind, *The Yellow Book* was the chief literary organ of the Decadence." See Cevasco, *Breviary of the Decadence* 36.

<sup>455</sup> Until contacted by the present author, Horsham Rare Books, UK were advertising Wilde as a contributor, and at the time of writing (16<sup>th</sup> October 2007) Brick Row Book Shop of San Francisco, US is listing Wilde as a contributor of prose in their set of the *Yellow Book* currently on sale.

Obviously, the Press' mistaking Louÿs' *Aphrodite* for Lane's periodical at the time of Wilde's arrest has contributed greatly to a confusion of interests between the two. Equally, Beardsley's expulsion from the magazine at the time of Wilde's trial gives the appearance of a direct causal relationship between the two events. However, as stated earlier, though Wilde's trials may have had a catalytic effect, the enmity between the *avant garde* and the conservatives within the *Yellow Book* had been growing since its inception. As Katherine Mix's admirable recounting of the details show, the specific conditions necessary for Watson's successful *coup d'état* were brought about by the accident of Lane, Le Gallienne and Harland all being out of the country at the time, leaving only the more easily coerced Chapman between the conspirators and their goal.<sup>456</sup> The fact that Lane was "entirely unprepared for this bracketing of Wilde with the *Yellow Book*; it was something he had never foreseen,"<sup>457</sup> demonstrates that, certainly in Lane's opinion, the confusion of the man with the magazine is unjustified, or purely accidental, and has its roots in the event of Wilde's arrest.<sup>458</sup>

However, this mistaken connection between Wilde and the *Yellow Book* is a misconception that appears to have suited much of the twentieth century's publishers, alongside literary and cultural critics. In 1928, Elkin Mathews and Marrot published *An Anthology of "Nineties" Verse*, compiled and edited by A. J. A.

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<sup>456</sup> Lane and Le Gallienne were in America, Harland in France. See Mix, *Study in Yellow* chapter 15, 140-147.

<sup>457</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 142.

<sup>458</sup> The publicly perceived links between Wilde and not only the *Yellow Book* and the Bodley Head in general, but also the whole genre of publishing typified by Lane's company, is evident in a conversation between Lane and Selwyn Image on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 1909. Image records that "[Lane] tells me that the publication of books of poetry and Belles Lettres generally has never recovered the blow given to it by O. Wilde's disaster. Till then they had sold like wild-fire." Diary of S. Image. Bodleian, Ms. Eng. Misc. d. 349, 34. Ricketts concurs "I do not think the harmful effects of the famous case upon our literature and art during the nineties can be over-estimated; it was immediate and led to a disinterest which lasted for years." Ricketts, *Oscar Wilde* 44.

Symons. In his introduction, Symons reflects upon the spirit of the 1890s, and seeks to encapsulate the ethos of “Nineties” writers, seen from the distance of 30 years and separated by the social upheaval of “the greatest war in history.”<sup>459</sup> For Symons, the *fin de siècle* represented a time of turmoil, as “Anthropology showed the moral code to be no more than a time-serving expedient; Socialism emphasised the invincible inequalities of modern life; and physical science disproved divinity.”<sup>460</sup> The writers selected in this anthology responded to such a world by introspection, “the cultivation of the self, the consolations of art.” Symons clearly identifies Pater’s “Conclusion” from *The Renaissance* as being “the gospel of the men of the ’nineties,” and refers to the same homogenous group as “Pater’s followers.” Indeed, given the brief list of notables included in the introduction, this sobriquet appears most fitting: Dowson, Johnson, Gray, Symons and Wilde. The full list of authors represents poets from the pages of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, *The Dial*, *The Yellow Book*, *The Savoy* and *The Pageant*. However, the book is bound so as to appear as a pastiche of, or even tribute to, the *Yellow Book* alone. Though slightly smaller in size, the boards and spine replicate the early Lane and Mathews *Yellow Books* almost exactly.

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<sup>459</sup> A. J. A. Symons, ed., *An Anthology of “Nineties” Verse* (London: Elkin Mathews and Marrot, 1928) xviii.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.



Figure 12 – Mathews and Lane *Yellow Book* vol. I, cover and spines to vols. I and II (taken from <http://www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections/yellowbook.html> and <http://www.robertfrew.com/books/artillus.html> respectively).

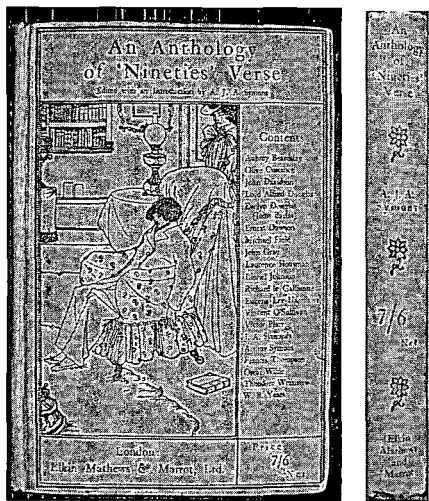


Figure 13 – Mathews and Marrot *Anthology of "Nineties" Verse* cover and spine (author's private collection).<sup>461</sup>

The typefaces are identical, as are the flower designs that separate the title, price and publisher on the spine.<sup>462</sup> The change of publisher may indeed be overlooked quite easily, as the 1894 edition is emblazoned “Elkin Mathews and John Lane,” whilst

<sup>461</sup> The cover illustration is actually a reproduction of Beardsley's frontispiece for Walt Ruding's *An Evil Motherhood*, published by Elkin Mathews in 1896.

<sup>462</sup> The spine decorations on the *Yellow Book* changed from volume III onwards, coincident with Mathews' departure from the Bodley Head. Although there is no reason to suppose a causal link between the two events with regard to such a trifling matter, the binding of Symons' *Anthology* would suggest that some of the original artwork for the Mathews-Lane editions remained part of Mathews' subsequent firm's artistic property.



Symons' 1928 edition bears the imprint of "Elkin Mathews and Marrot."<sup>463</sup> The cover layout is strikingly similar, sharing the same boxed-in title, publishers' imprint, price and original Beardsley illustration as the *Yellow Book*, the only difference being the 1928 Anthology's inclusion of the contents list on the edge of the front cover, whereas the *Yellow Book* displayed this on the rear. The resulting publication thus appears to be a "special edition" of the *Yellow Book*, devoted solely to poetry. Indeed, the Sotherans reprints of the *Yellow Book* were published around the same time, according to Mix, which could only have added to the confusion of Wilde with the periodical – the two books appear to be from the same publishing stable, part of the same series, and Wilde is a significant contributor to Symons' edition.<sup>464</sup> Hence both Wilde's work and a condensation of Pater's philosophies are displayed, quite wrongly, as being present between the covers of the *Yellow Book*, at the cost of the other periodicals to which the list of contributors and their concomitant philosophy actually belong.

Though professing his desire to create "the semblance of a choice number of *The Savoy*," Neville Wallis' 1947 "Selection of Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Literature and Art" entitled *Fin de Siècle* is bound in yellow, with a black-bordered, yellow and black design by Beardsley on the dust jacket, and situates Wilde's work alongside that of several *Yellow Book* contributors, as well as those of other periodicals.<sup>465</sup> This penchant for encasing anthologies on the art and culture of the *fin de siècle* in yellow covers stretches forward into contemporary critical anthologies, with Chris White's

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<sup>463</sup> Both Lane and Mathews had died by this point (1925 and 1921 respectively), but it is interesting to note Mathews' company's desire to be linked with the periodical over which the two men had fallen out, thirty four years earlier.

<sup>464</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 280.

<sup>465</sup> Neville Wallis, ed., *Fin De Siècle: A Selection of Late 19th Century Literature and Art* (London: Allan Wingate, 1947) 15.

*Nineteenth Century Writings on Homosexuality* (1999) and Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst's *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History* (2000) being prominent examples. Both of these works are bound in yellow and have a black Beardsley design on the cover, and both feature material by and on Wilde. Books such as these seek to capture something of the essence of the *fin de siècle*, and, especially with White's collection, Wilde may be taken as being the figurehead, if not indeed the initial inspiration, for the whole work; yet in each case the book is physically presented as being a virtual copy of the *Yellow Book*. The blurring of Wilde with the *Yellow Book* becomes complete with the publishing of a great many editions of Wilde's collected works, bound in yellow and bearing a Beardsley illustration, such as those produced by the Galley Press (1987), Chancellor Press (1989) and Blitz Editions (1990). For the casual observer, the complete works of Oscar Wilde are, in these cases, barely distinguishable from the *Yellow Book*.

Scholars who deal specifically with Wilde and the publishing world around him, however, give a more accurate portrayal of his relationship with the *Yellow Book*. According to Mix, Lane and almost all of the initial contributors to the publication were determined that "The bright unsullied pages of the *Yellow Book* should be closed to Oscar Wilde. About this there was no controversy."<sup>466</sup> Likewise, most report Wilde's negative response to the publication. Yet the assumption has been made that Wilde's dislike for the magazine stems solely from his exclusion from it; Frances Winwar writes that, in a fit of "childish pique," Wilde would not "hear a good word for the magazine that was occupying the place he usually held in the

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<sup>466</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 73.

spotlight.”<sup>467</sup> The issue of his not hearing “a good word” about the *Yellow Book* appears to stem from Charles Ricketts’ recollections of Wilde. Wilde apparently told Ricketts, “My dear boy, do not say nice false, things about the Yellow Book” before recounting a humorous tale of how he “bought it at the station” but found it so tiresome and dull that “before I had cut all the pages,” he tried to dispose of the book on several occasions, only to have it repeatedly returned to him.<sup>468</sup>

Though oft cited as encapsulating Wilde’s appraisal of the *Yellow Book*, the mistake made, in this instance by Winwar, is to separate the word “nice” from its necessary partner “false” in Wilde’s correcting of Ricketts. To assert that Wilde would not hear *anything* good said about the magazine is absurd, as he wrote to Bosie, probably on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1894, “Max on Cosmetics in the *Yellow Book* is wonderful: enough style for a large school, and all very precious and thought-out.”<sup>469</sup> Hence Ricketts’ crime was not saying something “nice” about the book, but making a false claim over its worth. The two letters from Wilde most frequently cited along with Ricketts’ recollection are to Bosie and to Ada Leverson.<sup>470</sup> To Leverson he asks, “Have you seen the *Yellow Book*? It is horrid and not yellow at all.”<sup>471</sup> Writing to Bosie, probably that same day, he gloats “The *Yellow Book* has appeared. It is dull and loathsome, a great failure. I am so glad.”<sup>472</sup> Wilde’s taking pleasure in the perceived “failure” of the venture is certainly grist to mill of those who surmise that his dislike for the periodical stems from purely personal matters; and admittedly, his

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<sup>467</sup> Winwar, *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow 'Nineties* 243.

<sup>468</sup> Ricketts, *Oscar Wilde* 52. Interestingly, the *Yellow Book* collection donated to Durham University library had several uncut pages from number 2 onwards, when consulted one hundred and twelve years after Wilde’s first reading.

<sup>469</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 589.

<sup>470</sup> Following Winwar, Katherine Mix, for example, uses these same three sources in her depiction of Wilde’s view of the *Yellow Book*. See Mix, *Study in Yellow* 91.

<sup>471</sup> “To Ada Leverson,” c. 16 April 1894, Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 588.

<sup>472</sup> Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 588-9.

*revelling* in its “failure,” rather than his reasons for declaring it a failure *per se*, may be seen in this light.

However, the salient points of these letters draw the reader’s attention to what Wilde thought the *Yellow Book* ought to be, as opposed to what it actually was, in his opinion; and as has been demonstrated in previous chapters, there is a significant disparity between what the *Yellow Book* is generally held to be, and what it actually is. Wilde chastised Ricketts playfully for saying “false things” about the work, and in the letters to Bosie and Levenson, he outlines the perceived false claims made by Lane’s magazine: it is not yellow, bright, pleasurable and a success, but dull, horrid, loathsome and a failure. This latter issue of it being a “failure” is the key to understanding Wilde’s complaint. Considering that the *Yellow Book* sold out of its first 5000 copies in five days, necessitating two further editions (and probably even more, if Norman Denny is correct), it cannot be considered to have been a financial or commercial failure. In these terms it was an unparalleled success. What Wilde meant was that the *Yellow Book* was an *artistic* failure, and a failure as an aesthetic periodical in the traditions of those that had gone before it.

For Wilde, the perceived yellowness of the *Yellow Book* is central to its artistic credibility. Once more, it is valuable to compare Lane’s *Yellow Book* with the actual yellow book, *Aphrodite*. Louÿs’ highly perfumed and exotic tale of Pagan courtesan life is a supremely sensuous literary work of art. It is *Aphrodite*’s inherent sensuality that earned it its yellow cover, and as Selwyn Image preached, “sensuousness” is the “first principle” in art. Furthermore, Wilde had himself “written” a yellow book, in the early, pre-Lippincott’s manuscript of *Dorian Gray*. Crossed out by Joseph

Stoddart, the “yellow book” that Lord Henry sent to Dorian was originally entitled “*Le Secret de Raoul* par Catulle Sarrazin” (*CWOW*, III, xxxix). Bristow explores the books and authors of which this fictional “yellow book” is an amalgam, including Rachilde’s *Monsieur Venus* (1884), a tale of a “cross-dressing protagonist [...] who, in an act of startling perversity, takes a male lover as the object of her assumed male homosexual desire.” (Ibid.)<sup>473</sup> Obviously, Wilde had very specific ideas as to precisely what a subversive “yellow book” should be. As the final years of Victoria’s reign progressed, “advanced” thinkers in the world of British Art had taken up sensuality and sexual freedom in art as their blazon: Art was their shield; sensuality was their sword; and the enemy was the censorious Great British, middle-class Philistine. As may be seen in the publishing stable of *The Savoy*, by the mid 1890s, the environment and philosophies of the artist and those of the pornographer had become virtually united. A new literary and artistic magazine emerging from within this environment and calling itself a Yellow Book did so under the weight of considerable expectation. It *should* be voicing or demonstrating the principle of art for its own sake; it *should* be revelling in sensuality; it *should* be pushing at the boundaries of the politics of publishing; and above all, it *should* fundamentally oppose bourgeois sentiments on art, sexuality and life in general. This the *Yellow Book* did not do. The “wide net” approach, that Lane had to adopt in order to make the venture a commercial success, precluded such an exclusive manifesto.

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<sup>473</sup> See also “Commentary” *CWOW*, III, 392-3.

Hence “not yellow at all” and in this respect “a failure,” are accurate appraisals of the *Yellow Book*, from such a point of view as Wilde’s.<sup>474</sup> Remarking on his opinion of the magazine, Ian Fletcher states, “Wilde was as usual perfectly correct,” before outlining his own appraisal of the diverse, but somewhat “safe” magazine that was the *Yellow Book*.<sup>475</sup> Notwithstanding, Wilde *did* praise individual writers within the *Yellow Book* whom he deemed worthy of merit; Max Beerbohm has already been mentioned, and, although not specific about his contributions to the *Yellow Book*, Wilde wrote to Arthur Symons, declaring that “I had admired your work for a long time.”<sup>476</sup> Therefore Wilde’s appraisal of the magazine as a whole may be seen to differ from his valuations of the work of individuals therein. The idea that Wilde rejected the publication outright in a fit of jealousy, as is stated overtly by Winwar and inferred by Mix, is thus unfounded. Wilde gave praise where it was due, but criticised the *Yellow Book* as an entity, as it failed to live up to what Wilde believed an *avant garde* literary and artistic magazine so named ought to be.

Furthermore, Wilde was far from being a lone voice in his condemnation of the *Yellow Book*. Dowson’s appraisal of the relative quality of the two magazines cited earlier, is shown to be in a slightly more pejorative light in a letter to Herbert Horne: “Have you seen the ‘Savoy,’ & do you like it? At least, I think it ‘knocks the wind’ out of the ‘Yellow Book.’”<sup>477</sup> To Smithers, Dowson is even more candid: “May the hair of John Lane grow green with Envy!”<sup>478</sup> Compared with the *Savoy*, a magazine

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<sup>474</sup> Charles Ricketts also records Wilde as stating that “yellow is the colour of joy!” which may be added to his dismissal of the *Yellow Book* on account of it being “not yellow at all.” See Ricketts, *Oscar Wilde* 33.

<sup>475</sup> Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* 192.

<sup>476</sup> Letter to Symons, 22 October 1890, Holland and Hart-Davis, eds., *Letters of Oscar Wilde* 455.

<sup>477</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> March 1896. Flower and Maas, eds., *The Letters of Ernest Dowson* 346.

<sup>478</sup> Cited Beckson, ed., *Aesthetes and Decadents* xli.

well within the tradition of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, Dowson (a major contributor to both periodicals) also sees the *Yellow Book* as a relative failure.

Looking again at many of the press reactions quoted in critical works on the *Yellow Book*, not all of them are simply aggressive towards, or shocked by, the “New” style.

The *National Observer*, after parodying Lane’s marketing stunt as “a new planet – a star of modernity, a yellow asteroid,” found the resulting work “disappointing.”<sup>479</sup>

Like Wilde and Dowson, the *Observer* also viewed the *Yellow Book* as something of a failure, considering its ambitious claims, pre-publication.<sup>480</sup> Neither is it unseemly to link Wilde’s opinions with some of those of the established Press. Contrary to Winwar’s depiction of Wilde as having been beaten to the “spotlight” by Lane’s magazine, Oscar Wilde was an established star himself, by the time of the *Yellow Book*’s inception – a fact that is borne out by the few references to him within the magazine itself.

In his “Letter to the Editor,” defending his “Defence of Cosmetics” after its drubbing in the conservative press, Max Beerbohm stresses the parodic and humorous quality of the piece, and claims that had it been written by a hand “not a hundred miles from Tite Street” it would have been taken as “a very delicate bit of satire” (*Yellow Book* II, 282). Similarly in his satirical “1880,” he infers that the “social renaissance” in artistic matters in England is perceived by the public in general as being started by Wilde (*Yellow Book*, IV, 278). Manifestly Beerbohm is setting Wilde far above the

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<sup>479</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 87.

<sup>480</sup> By comparison, the *Savoy* received on the whole much better reviews regarding its quality. See Beckson, ed., *Aesthetes and Decadents* xli.

upstart New Writers of the *Yellow Book*, in terms of fame and perceived influence.<sup>481</sup>

Once more, therefore, Wilde is shown to stand at a considerable distance from the *Yellow Book* as a whole.

Nor is right to assume that Wilde *wanted* to be involved, purely because he was excluded from doing so. The desire to be included in Lane's new venture was far from universal – a great many writers and artists declined Lane's invitation. There was considerable opposition to the *Yellow Book*, even within the Bodley Head stable. Mix cites "the Catholic household of Alice and Wilfrid Meynell" as being the source of much of the opposition, and gives the example of Francis Thompson as another whom Lane repeatedly attempted to bring into the magazine, without success.<sup>482</sup> A simple letter from Charles Shannon to Lane also adds weight to the idea that Wilde was one among a great many artistes who did not actually want to be associated with the *Yellow Book*: "After all Ricketts & I have decided not to appear in your 'Yellow Book' as it might lead to complications over the fourth Dial, which will appear in May [1896]."<sup>483</sup> Though sounding like a reasonable excuse, the planning, execution and selling of *Dials* four and five (1896 and '97) were no obstacle to Shannon and Ricketts contributing four items to issues I, II and III of *The Savoy* during the first half of 1896, not to mention Shannon's considerable role as art editor for *The Pageant* (1896 & '97) to which both he and Ricketts were major contributors. It would be reasonable to assume that the two men behind the "perfect [...] unique

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<sup>481</sup> As a demonstration of Wilde's more established status at the time, it is interesting to speculate what he might have contributed to the *Yellow Book*, had he been invited and so desired. "Poems in Prose" was submitted to the *Fortnightly Review* in July, 1894, and would therefore fit the time-scale for a *Yellow Book* submission. These aesthetic re-workings of scriptural themes show a depth and maturity far outstripping anything written in Lane's periodical. Reprinted in Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 229-44.

<sup>482</sup> Mix, *Study in Yellow* 137.

<sup>483</sup> Undated letter from Charles Shannon to Lane. John Lane Archive (photocopies), UCE, Birmingham. The *Yellow Book* File 66.



[and] delightful” *Dial*, to quote Wilde, were in fact quite capable of working for and editing several periodicals at once, but would rather not have their names and work associated with the *Yellow Book*.

Hence, though Lane’s pointedly excluding Wilde did cause offence, resulting in him being “glad” of its artistic failure, Wilde’s dislike for the *Yellow Book* is thoroughly justified on its own terms, and is not merely a jealous reaction. Moreover it is a point of view shared by many others.

As the analysis of the *Yellow Book* contained here shows, beyond the early, repetitive nature of the self-obsessed New Writer’s story, there is no unity of message in the periodical. The decadent and the modernist lie down with the bourgeois in matters of art, morality, class-consciousness and literary and artistic criticism, throughout its pages. Wilde’s message, however, was quite singular in its purpose; from his American lectures in the early 1880s through to *De Profundis*, the Apostle of Art preached his unchanging gospel. His monumental letter to Bosie makes plain his life-long devotion to Art:

You knew what my art was to me, the great primal note by which I had revealed, first myself to myself, and then myself to the world; the great passion of my life; the love to which all other loves were as marsh water to red wine; or the glowworm of the marsh to the magic mirror of the moon. (*CWOW*, II, 69.)

The linking of a realisation of the self with a realisation and embracing of true art shows obvious connections with Pater’s philosophies within the *Renaissance*;<sup>484</sup> and upon examining the details of his personal manifesto, one can clearly identify the

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<sup>484</sup> Wilde specifies that the “book which has had such a strange influence over my life” is indeed Pater’s *Renaissance*, which he read during his first term at Oxford, in *De Profundis*, *CWOW*, II, 102.

aesthetic periodicals with which Oscar Wilde's name and legacy should rightfully be joined.

Alongside the artistic revolution of Morris' Art and Crafts movement, Oscar Wilde and the Century Guild's core writers are united in their schooling at Oxford under the philosophies of Ruskin, Arnold and Pater. The American lectures display Wilde's formative connections with the Arts and Crafts movement, which, though instigated and fuelled by William Morris, had been given considerable impetus within Oxford by the teachings of Ruskin. The inherent socialism of both men's philosophies underpins Wilde's socially engaged theories of art. In the fragmentary manuscript entitled "Art and the Handicraftsman" (partially and tentatively dated 1882 by Ross) Wilde explains "how it first came to me at all to create an artistic movement in England."<sup>485</sup> The event was Ruskin's famous road-building scheme, whereby fledgling artists and poets of Oxford became labourers, that they might use their time and effort to the benefit of poor villagers:

And I felt that if there was enough spirit amongst the young men to go out to such work as road-making for the sake of a noble ideal of life, I could from them create an artistic movement that might change, as it has changed, the face of England.<sup>486</sup>

Though Morris desired a wholesale political revolution, Wilde and the wider Aesthetic movement were actively promoting a "design revolution [...] premised on [...] the same values of creating a better, more sensible, and more beautiful life for the ordinary person."<sup>487</sup> Giving credence to Wilde's seemingly arrogant stance of representing a virtual one-man artistic revolution, Peter Stansky insists that "It will

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<sup>485</sup> Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 192.

<sup>486</sup> Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 194.

<sup>487</sup> Stansky, *Redesigning the World* 69.

not do to underestimate the importance of small-group design activities in changing the nature, style, and look of English life.”<sup>488</sup> It is indeed with these words that Stansky introduces the Ruskin-inspired Century Guild, “One of the earliest groups to emerge in the outburst of design activity in the 1880s,” formed as it was in 1882 – the same year as Wilde’s lectures in America. Indeed, the very titles of Wilde’s lectures display this fundamental connection between the Century Guild and Wilde’s artistic mission. “The English Renaissance of Art,” “House Decoration” and “Art and the Handicraftsman” all deal with matters that virtually define the Century Guild’s mission “to render all branches of art the sphere no longer of the tradesman but of the artist [... to] restore building, decoration, glass painting, pottery, wood carving and metalwork to their right place beside painting and sculpture.”<sup>489</sup>

However, as demonstrated in the title of the first of those lectures, Wilde and the Century Guild’s Oxonian honing, fashioned by Jowett, Arnold and Pater results in a shift away from Morrisian Revolution and towards the Paterian notion of Renaissance. Though *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891) may appear to have a titular link to the revolutionary, for Wilde, socialism offers relief from the mundane problems of daily life, affording the individual the necessary time and opportunity to advance his personality.<sup>490</sup> The socialist rhetoric of anti-materialism is perceived by Wilde as offering a shift from “to have” towards “to be,”<sup>491</sup> and in a masterful reworking of the gospel message, Christ’s anti-materialist stance is melded with this

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Horne, *Hobby Horse Prospectus*.

<sup>490</sup> In many of the details of Wilde’s re-ordering of society, he is shown as being at one with the ideas of the Century Guild. For example, on the necessity of a slave class for a society akin to the Hellenic ideal, Wilde states “human slavery is wrong” and advocates mechanical slaves for society’s betterment. See Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings*, Penguin Classics. Introd. Hesketh Pearson (London: Penguin, 1986) 33. Likewise, Mackmurdo believed that “machinery could act as a liberating force that would free men to spend more time in pursuit of the idea of beauty itself.” Stansky, *Redesigning the World* 71.

<sup>491</sup> Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* 25.

individualist view of socialism, leading to Christ's central message being defined as "be thyself."<sup>492</sup> This shift in ideology marks a movement from the political to the personal; but it is through refining the personality that one may have the greatest effect upon society:

I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age. I had realized this for myself at the very dawn of my manhood, and had forced my age to realize it afterwards [...] I made art a philosophy and philosophy an art [...] whatever I touched, I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty [...] I awoke the imagination of my century. (*CWOW*, II, 94-5.)

A revolution in society may indeed be the end result, but it is only brought about by the Paterian renaissance of the individual. Arthur Mackmurdo is described as being "more of an individualist than Morris,"<sup>493</sup> illustrating this central departure from the Guild's Arts and Crafts roots. Moreover, Morris' wholesale rejection of the notion of Renaissance and its concomitant Greek philosophy ("the curse of all the modern hateful things")<sup>494</sup> defines the considerable distance between 1880s Aestheticism and its Arts and Crafts forefather. However, Mackmurdo appears far more akin to Morris in many of his later ideas, which, as mentioned earlier, are given over entirely to matters of political and social change.<sup>495</sup> Within the Century Guild it was Image, Horne and Galton who expounded, and to an extent demonstrated, the notion of "the man making the age," akin to Wilde. Pater's *Renaissance* is a profound influence upon the writings and philosophies of Selwyn Image within the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, along with those of his former pupil, Horne; and for Galton, Matthew Arnold acts as the supreme role model for a personal renaissance that can have a

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<sup>492</sup> Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* 27.

<sup>493</sup> Stansky, *Redesigning the World* 75.

<sup>494</sup> Mackmurdo's "Notes on Morris for Pevsner" 1-3, held at the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow. Cited Stansky, *Redesigning the World* 81.

<sup>495</sup> For example see Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, *The Human Hive: Its Life and Law* (London: Watts, 1926).

fundamental and lasting effect on society. Arnold and Pater gave the example of the revived Hellenic ideal, and moreover they proved the validity of their claim that the Hellenised individual is responsible for undertaking a change in society, as Arnold's sanctified life stands testament to Galton, and as does Pater's theorising for Wilde, Image and Horne.

Indeed, following Pater's example, the notion of theorising is itself central to the personal renaissance which may bring about a full societal Renaissance, for Wilde, Image, Horne and Galton. *The Critic As Artist* (1891) contains an exchange which mirrors some of the criticism levelled at Pater's *Renaissance* when first published. Akin to the *North American Review*'s opinion that "Mr Pater seems bent on weaving veils of mist and moonlight,"<sup>496</sup> and the many who challenged the use of the word "History" in the original title, Ernest exclaims,

Gilbert, you treat the world as if it were a crystal ball. You hold it in your hand, and reverse it to please a wilful fancy. You do nothing but rewrite history.

GILBERT

The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it."<sup>497</sup>

Though appearing flippant, this notion of rewriting, or rather reinterpreting history is crucial to Pater's radical redrawing of the term "renaissance," changing it from a socio-historical term into a personal quality, and it also underpins much of the *Hobby Horse*'s theorising over modern Catholicism's embodiment of the Hellenic

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<sup>496</sup> Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 105.

<sup>497</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Intentions*, 2nd ed. (London: Unicorn, 1945) 101-2.

tradition.<sup>498</sup> Wilde's assertion that "art is the one thing which Death cannot harm,"<sup>499</sup> is central to Galton's reworking of the artistic tradition from Greece to Imperial Rome and from thence into Holy Rome and modernity: "no gulph between them, in time; no difference, in style; they are coterminous, continuous, and similar." (CGHH V, xvii, 22.) As Galton cries, "can any period be named, in which the classical traditions were not a living influence?" so too Wilde, remarking on the ancient tradition manifest in Whitman, declares, "Calliope's call is not yet closed, nor are the epics of Asia ended; the Sphinx is not yet silent, nor the fountain of Castaly dry. For art is very life itself and knows nothing of death."<sup>500</sup> Thus the philosophy of an Hellenic understanding of Art, allied with Pater's notions of the fundamental connections between art and the personality, is key to both Wilde and the Century Guild, as they all re-draw socio-political history in order to make a living connection between their modern theories of art and selfhood, and those of ancient Greece and Rome.

Thus, though born of Morris and Ruskin, directly socialist ideals evolved into the more socially disengaged Paterian notions of the personality. This change in philosophy marks the development of Arts and Crafts, as a theory, into 1880s Aestheticism. However, that is not to say that Pater, Wilde and the Century Guild did not wish to influence society at large. On the contrary, the refining of the individual should result in personalities so brilliant that merely one man might bring about a social Renaissance, as is clearly stated by Wilde.

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<sup>498</sup> Pater's critics seize upon this aspect of *The Renaissance*, stating that his method of illustrating the personality through speculation flies in the face of the "accepted" use of the term "Renaissance [...] to express an epoch, a fact, an intellectual phase, and a social condition." See Sarah Wister's review of *The Renaissance* in Seiler, ed., *Pater: Critical Heritage* 99.

<sup>499</sup> "Art and the Handicraftsman." Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 195.

<sup>500</sup> "The English Renaissance of Art." Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 130.

The intensity of belief in the individual's ability to affect society at large has already been seen in the fervent writings heralding a Nouveau Renaissance in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*. As Image and Horne both stated, had one "but eyes to see," then the Hellenic world is indeed to be found all around modern London. Similarly, Wilde tells his American audiences, with typical confidence and surety, of the "great English Renaissance of Art in this century [... a] new birth of the spirit of man, like the great Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century."<sup>501</sup> Such sentiments abound in his writings, from his lecture on "Art and the Handicraftsman" in 1882 through to *Dorian Gray* in 1890 and '91, along with *The Decay of Lying*, *The Critic As Artist*, and *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* also in 1891. Indeed, the most potent demonstration of his unshakeable belief in the power of the personal renaissance may be found in his repeated attempts to enlighten the lost cause that is Lord Alfred Douglas throughout *De Profundis*.

Though Wilde's vain attempts towards a personal renaissance for Bosie may indeed be seen in a self-centred light, the effect of this nineteenth-century renaissance of the individual was to be shared throughout society. Though moving away from Morris towards Pater in terms of under-lying philosophy, Wilde and the Century Guild were all actively engaged in a wholesale change of society, with regard to the arts. In his early lectures, Wilde shares with his listeners "The great and golden rule of art as well as life," citing Blake, Michael Angelo and Dürer, in order to improve the lives of his audience by refining their appreciation of art.<sup>502</sup> His lecture on "House

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<sup>501</sup> "The English Renaissance of Art." Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 111-2.

<sup>502</sup> "The English Renaissance of Art," Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 116.

Decoration” goes into great detail on the subject, as well as advising the American populace on modes of dress for both men and women.<sup>503</sup> Likewise, the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* includes examples of wallpaper design, embroidery techniques and architectural plans for houses that were actually used as both practical and aesthetically pleasing designs,<sup>504</sup> alongside the essays and polemics on the rightful place of art in society. Indeed, the Century Guild’s influence reached at least as far as the eastern seaboard of North America, as a Mr. F. Watts wrote to Herbert Horne in 1891, requesting permission to form a Bostonian version of the Century Guild.<sup>505</sup> The intent of the Century Guild and the *Intentions* of Oscar Wilde are alike in purpose, as, taking up the many writings by the likes of Image on the Guild’s aim of “The Unity of Art,” Wilde states, in *The Critic as Artist*,

The critic reproduces the work that he criticizes in a mode that is never imitative, and part of whose charm may really consist in the rejection of resemblance, and shows us in this way not merely the meaning but also the mystery of Beauty, and, by transforming each art into literature, solves once and for all the problem of Art’s unity.<sup>506</sup>

As with the Guild’s primary mission statement, for Wilde, the enemy of the artist was the tradesman, and the commercialism that stood in the place of artistic craftsmanship. Though Wilde credits the “lofty personalities” of “The English Renaissance of Art” in 1882 with “splendid achievements in poetry and in the decorative arts and painting [...] all the increased comeliness and grace of dress, and the furniture of houses,” the Renaissance itself is

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<sup>503</sup> Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 159-71.

<sup>504</sup> According to Peter Stansky, the house “Brooklyn” in Enfield, one of the few surviving buildings designed and built by Mackmurdo, is similar to the designs for houses included in the annual volumes of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* for 1886 and ’87. See Stansky, *Redesigning the World* 87.

<sup>505</sup> See Tickner, “Selwyn Image,” 191.

<sup>506</sup> Wilde, *Intentions* 117.



not complete. For there can be no great sculpture without a beautiful national life, and the commercial spirit of England has killed that; no great drama without a beautiful national life, and the commercial spirit of England has killed that too.<sup>507</sup>

In *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* Wilde states quite categorically that

The moment that an artist takes note of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an amusing craftsman, an honest or a dishonest tradesman [...] Art is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known. I am inclined to say that it is the only real mode of Individualism that the world has known.<sup>508</sup>

Throughout this essay, Wilde rages against the values and attitudes of the English bourgeoisie, using this classification of commercialism to define the falling standards in public life and the media, as it was. The sensational “New” Journalism is shown to have “tradesman-like habits” in its pandering to the sordid and invasive tastes and demands of the philistine mob.<sup>509</sup> In “House Decoration,” Wilde appears to be drawing upon his epiphanic road-making experience under Ruskin as he declares,

We should see more of the workman than we do. We should not be content to have the salesman stand between us – the salesman who knows nothing of what he is selling save that he is charging a great deal too much for it. And watching the workman will teach that most important lesson – the nobility of all rational workmanship.<sup>510</sup>

The countering of the “commerce first” attitude that Wilde encountered throughout America is the bedrock of the lecture,<sup>511</sup> as he repeatedly stresses the primary importance of *design* in all matters. This quality may indeed be seen to be the very essence of the Century Guild, not merely in its philosophy, but in its physical being; its founding trio, Image, Horne and Mackmurdo were designers first and foremost.

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<sup>507</sup> Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 137-8.

<sup>508</sup> Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* 34.

<sup>509</sup> Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* 41.

<sup>510</sup> Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 169.

<sup>511</sup> Indeed, the “crude commercialism of America” is also a feature of *The Decay of Lying*. See Wilde, *Intentions* 27.

Thus in terms of origins, philosophies, priorities and enemies, Wilde and the Century Guild are one. Moreover, as the 1880s aesthetes faced an expansion of enemy forces, Wilde and the Guild's responses are once more united. The passages contained herein regarding the *Hobby Horse* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* demonstrate the fact that Wilde's philosophies and art, like those of the Guild, reflect a transformation during the 1880s, as bourgeois criticism of the artistic realm brought about a defiant reaction from artists. Akin to Selwyn Image's journalistic responses to the British Matron and company, Wilde's essays and lectures also offer examples of specific counter arguments to Horsley.

Another British Matron's horrified depiction of the freedoms afforded to French artists in *The Times* is taken up by Wilde, in his critique of the vulgar and invasive, populist British press:

In France they manage these things better [...] In France, in fact, they limit the journalist, and allow the artist almost perfect freedom. Here we allow absolute freedom to the journalist and entirely limit the artist. English public opinion, that is to say, tries to impede and warp the man who makes things that are beautiful in effect, and compels the journalist to retail things that are ugly, or disgusting, or revolting in fact, so that we have the most serious journalists in the world and the most indecent newspapers.<sup>512</sup>

Wilde's masterful rhetoric overturns the Matron's critique in every aspect, favouring French values over those of Britain, and, whilst purifying the intentions and actions of the artist, he renders newspapers and their vulgar opinions – the very medium and matter of the Matron's complaint – “indecent.” Two years earlier, in 1889, Wilde's article for the *English Illustrated Magazine*, “London Models” may be seen as being

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<sup>512</sup> The Soul of Man Under Socialism. Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* 41-2.

a playful, yet serious, counter to the argument typified by Senex's letter to the *Times*, supporting Horsley by stating that London artist's models were exploited and comparable to prostitutes.<sup>513</sup> Though the tone is pure "Lord Henry," Wilde's light-hearted journalism specifically undermines Senex's claim of squalid exploitation, claiming that "English models are a well-behaved and hard working class,"<sup>514</sup> and that "Nearly all of them live with their parents, and help support the house."<sup>515</sup>

Wilde's insistence upon the amorality of art is probably his most renowned topic, from the American lectures in 1882 through to it representing the central pillar of his self-defence in the Old Bailey in 1895. In "The English Renaissance of Art" Wilde states "one should never talk of an immoral poem – poems are either well written or badly written, that is all."<sup>516</sup> This statement is widened from poetry to "books" in general for its more famous outing in the preface to *Dorian Gray*, (*CWOW*, III [1891], 167) and his defence of the statement is immortalised with regard to all artistic efforts at his trial: when asked whether the phrase relating to immoral books "expresses your view" by Carson, Wilde replied, "My view on art, yes."<sup>517</sup>

The imposition of a relative morality by the Matron and those like "her" upon the aesthete of the 1880s results in the artists of the Century Guild and the Vale becoming more strident in their opposition of the censorious or pious demands made by the bourgeoisie. Thus the moral engagement of the aesthete (even if that

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<sup>513</sup> Senex sees the role of the artist's model as being "the only practicable means of escape from a still worse alternative" for girls "whom hunger and want have driven to one of the two courses, each equally humiliating if not quite equally deplorable." Senex, "To the Editor of *The Times*," *The Times* May 22 1885.

<sup>514</sup> Reproduced in Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 226.

<sup>515</sup> Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 220.

<sup>516</sup> Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 142.

<sup>517</sup> Holland, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess* 80.

engagement is a clear refutation) leads to the transformation of a new, perceived creed, labelled decadence, the very word itself carrying connotations of wilful decay, decline or disobedience. At the opening of the present work, Dorian Gray's own moment of transition from amoral aestheticism into morally-engaged decadence is clearly indicative of this *reactive* nature of British decadence at the *fin de siècle*: "a new hedonism that was to re-create life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely puritanism that is having, in our own day, its curious revival."<sup>518</sup> The "new hedonism," which may be termed "decadence," is necessary in order to "save" life from puritanism. As Selwyn Image preached, "sensuousness" is the "first principle" in Art, and must be protected at all costs – whether or not that cost is clear and open conflict between the Artist and Protestant Christianity. Taking Pater's philosophies from the *Renaissance*, Wilde and the Guild both sought to fuse Art and Life utterly, as may be seen in almost all of the critical work in the *Hobby Horse*, and also in the tangled web of artistic opinion and personal behaviour that defined Wilde's trials for all parties. Hence, within the movement which became known as decadence, the Artist and the Art are virtually synonymous.

Throughout the issues of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, *The Dial* and *The Savoy*, sensuousness and sexual expression become ever more important modes of discourse in this defensive battle with puritanism. The *Hobby Horse* and *The Dial* openly revel in sensual representations of the nude and sexually deviant poetry and prose.

Likewise, the coded erotica of *The Savoy* is the most striking feature of this magazine, whose *raison d'être* was to expose the hypocrisy of bourgeois attitudes towards sexual behaviour and expression. Thus the magazines that flourished in the

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<sup>518</sup> Wilde, *Dorian Gray and Mr W. H.*, bound White 66.

tradition of the Century Guild may be seen to be of a piece with much of Wilde's work. The sexual defiance of *Dorian Gray* is manifestly a direct reaction to puritanism, and *Salomé* may be seen as Image's gospel of sensuousness brought to life. The moral and sexual hypocrisy of the class that banned *Salomé* and condemned *Dorian Gray* is exposed and ridiculed in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893); there is also the possibility that Wilde was involved in the creation of the masterpiece of sexually and socially subversive literature that is *Teleny*.<sup>519</sup>

Oscar Wilde and the Century Guild were therefore cast from the same mould, shared the same philosophies, held similar opinions, fought the same battles and were changed and shaped by the same social conditions. Alongside the fundamental connections between writings in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* and *Dorian Gray* explored earlier, Wilde's writings over the years show him as sharing a great many interests and personal tastes with writers of the Guild's magazine. Like Horne, Wilde praises the aesthetic style of Charles I in "House Decoration,"<sup>520</sup> as with Galton, he singles out St. Francis of Assisi as the only "true" (i.e. Hellenic) Christian to come after Christ, in *De Profundis*. (*CWOW*, II, 123.) The biography of Benvenuto Cellini, John Addington Symonds' 1889 translation of which was praised by Galton in the *Hobby Horse* (IV, xvi, 153), is cited by Wilde as a reference work for his central philosophy in *The Decay of Lying*.<sup>521</sup> Although Wilde's personal relationship with the Catholic faith is ambiguous, on the subject of aesthetic Catholicism, he is at one with the many voices of the *Hobby Horse*: "it is always a

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<sup>519</sup> For a discussion of Wilde's involvement in the book, see John McRae's introduction, [Oscar Wilde] and Others, *Teleny*, ed. John McRae (London: Prowler-GMP, 1999), Nelson, *Publisher to the Decadents: Leonard Smithers in the Careers of Beardsley, Wilde, Dowson* 315, 19-20.

<sup>520</sup> Wilde, *Essays and Lectures* 163.

<sup>521</sup> Wilde, *Intentions* 26.

source of pleasure and awe to me to remember that the ultimate survival of the Greek chorus, lost elsewhere to art, is to be found in the servitor answering the priest at Mass.” (*CWOW*, II, 112.) Indeed, Wilde’s total re-drawing of the personality of Christ, to forge an Hellenic-Artist Deity within *De Profundis* may be seen as an ultimate extension of the *Hobby Horse*’s remapping of the artistic and social Hellenic traditions within the Catholic Church.

Though never a contributor, Wilde was an avid fan of *The Dial*; and the magazine’s stance on matters of art and sensuality have led the magazine to be labelled “Wildean” in its approach.<sup>522</sup> Wilde would appear to have never remarked upon *The Savoy*, published, as it was, only during his years of imprisonment. However, his appreciation of Arthur Symonds’ work, friendship with a great many of *The Savoy*’s contributors, and his later allegiance to Leonard Smithers, not to mention the shared concerns in the matter of the magazine, would suggest that Wilde would have approved. Ultimately, however, there is but one magazine with whom the name of Oscar Wilde should be joined: one in their making, one in their work; the magazine from which he took such great inspiration and the only such periodical to which Wilde ever actually contributed, great founding father of the British *fin de siècle* Little Magazines – *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*.

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<sup>522</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, *Bodley Head* 60.

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